

THE SOUL
OF THE
"C.R.B."

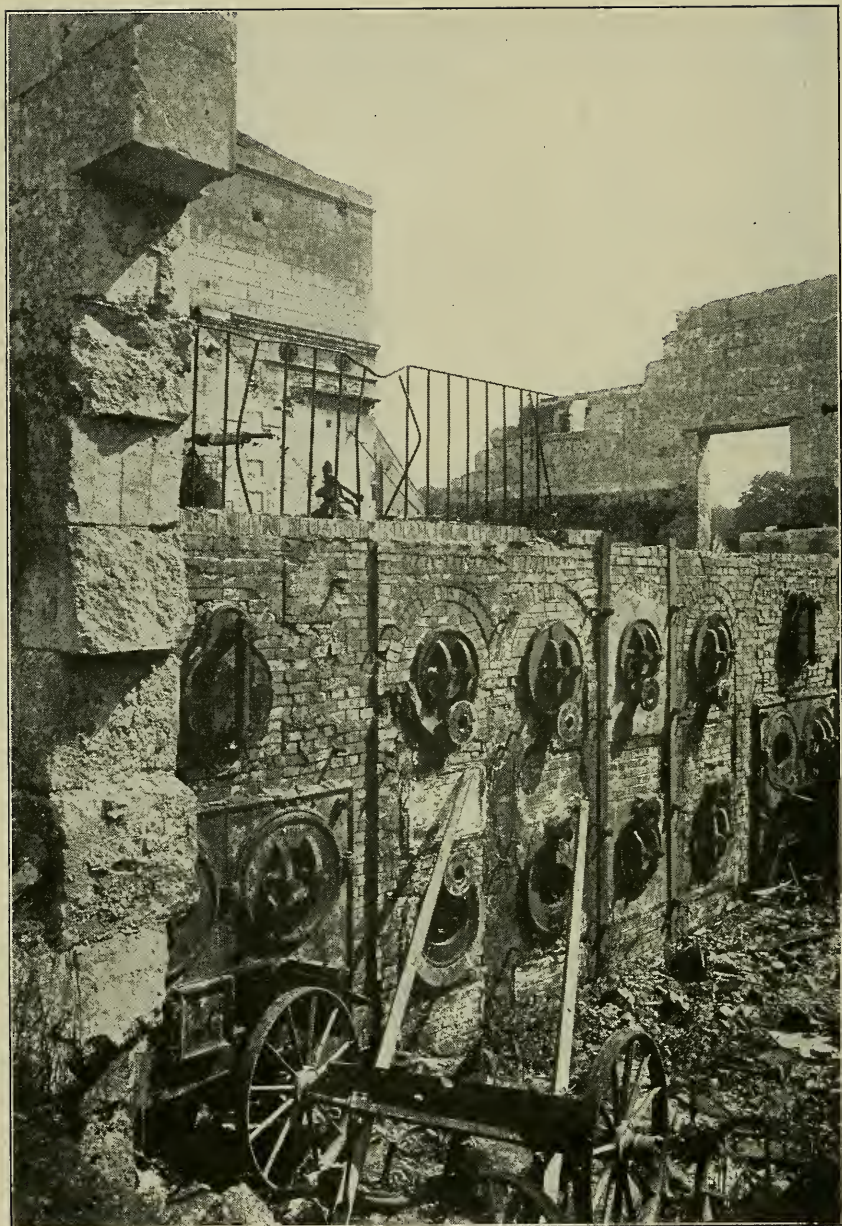
By
MADAME
SAINT-RENÉ
TALLANDIER.





THE SOUL OF THE "C. R. B."





German thefts of factory equipment in northern France.
Boiler-room in a factory at Chiry-Ourscamp, Oise.

THE SOUL OF THE "C. R. B."

A FRENCH VIEW OF THE HOOVER
RELIEF WORK

BY
MADAME SAINT-RENÉ TAILLANDIER

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ILLUSTRATED



NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1919

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Published August, 1919



SEP 10 1919



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LETTER PREFACE

TO MR. HOOVER AND THE DIRECTORS AND
DELEGATES OF THE COMMISSION FOR RE-
LIEF IN BELGIUM AND NORTHERN FRANCE

MY DEAR FRIENDS:

This little book may perhaps surprise you. It is a true story, and accurate concerning your work, but in regard to your personalities I have allowed myself some freedom. Will you bear me malice if, in order to show the whole scope of your attainment, and to make it stand out clearly to our own people, I have simplified some of the details?

These details were your own selves, with your names, all of them. How much I should have cared to have known each of you, to have been able to distinguish between you, and not, therefore, to attribute to one what was perhaps, in fact, done by another—but what is most deeply impressed upon my mind was that you had but one heart, one brain, one leader. You offered yourselves in a body to starving Belgium and France, and no sooner

were you freed from that task than you threw yourselves into other work, under your own flag of the stars, without giving us a chance to meet you and to clasp your hands.

Do not be hard on this little book, because it is you who have written it; it is made up from your own official reports and your own narratives, added to the personal recollections which some of you have given me. Hunt will see that I have read closely his striking book "War Bread," and I have also studied the "Head-Quarters Nights" of Mr. Vernon Kellogg, and Mrs. Kellogg's "Women in Belgium." I have taken my facts from you, and sometimes also my ideas. *Si quid boni tuum*. I have given, if not every root and branch, at least the sad and wonderful flower of your work, and from the perfume of goodness and of pity which it breathes my French readers will know the stem on which it grew.

In speaking of you, workers of the beginning, I must do so in the same modest tone in which you speak of yourselves. It always touched us when you tried to avoid our thanks and when you told us how well the Belgians and the French in the invaded districts had seconded you, and how during their frightful

ordeal they had proved the truth of the proverb "Help thyself, and heaven will help thee." My dear friends, I seem to hear you repeating, by our stricken hearths, whose destruction was written long beforehand by Germany in the Book of Destiny, the saying of one of our old French masters of the art of surgery. When his patient was cured he said with the modesty of a true Christian: "I dressed his wound—God healed him."

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THE SOUL OF THE C. R. B.

CHAPTER I

AN EVENING WITH THE C. R. B.

THE CONFESSION OF AN EX-NEUTRAL

IT was two years ago—let us go back in order to be sure of our starting-point, and be able to judge how much we have accomplished—yes, it was two years ago, in April, 1917. That spring of 1917 weighed heavily on French hearts. From its outset the character of the Russian revolution showed clearly that we had nothing to expect from it but disaster, and we were still in suspense as to the final decision of the United States.

For the third time Spring, as she passed over the fields of France, felt her wings weighted down by blood.

But one evening, in the pretty blue-and-gold drawing-room of our American friend, Mrs. Felder, the tension was relaxed; we held out our hands to each other cordially and

there was gladness in all our eyes—the United States had finally decided to go into the war.

There were about thirty of us there, Americans and French; yesterday friends and to-day allies. These Thursday teas of Mrs. Felder's were a meeting-ground for some French men and women who knew America, and some Americans who knew and loved France. Writers, journalists, lecturers, professors, sent from one shore of the Atlantic to the other, charitable women, apostles of American generosity, found there an opportunity to express themselves and to reach each other.

Why were we all at war? What had caused it? How had France, occupied with social and labor problems, and fairly fermenting with pacifism, been able to spring to her feet, all differences forgotten, and face her foe? Why had the United States been merely observant for so long, watching and judging the blows as they fell?

We had much to learn, on one side and the other. Like Narcissus bending over his own image, the old peoples of the world, looking into the old rivers of history, saw only their own reflection.

That evening Mr. William Sharp, the

American ambassador, came in for a few moments. I can see him now, leaning on the chimney-piece; his grave smile was even graver than usual, and his eyes, always serene, seemed brighter; they shone with quiet satisfaction. And, alluding to other meetings when we French had endeavored to impart to our American friends our own fervor of conviction, he said in his even, courteous voice: "Well, the time of the propaganda is up."

The expression of his face was slightly ironical, although full of sympathy. He perhaps felt that our impatient zeal had sometimes doubted the motives of the United States, or, rather, had misunderstood that long course of serious thought during which the great nation had weighed its duties, not its opportunities. And yet, all through that autumn and winter of 1916-1917 our guests and our friends had repeated: "You will see—America will go into the war within six months"—or four, or three. They were never tired of making for our benefit an exact and almost astronomical calculation, to prove that their intervention was inevitable.

"It will come," said John Felder. "Good

God!" he cried, striking the table hard with his fist, "within three months you will see American regiments in France!"

I may acknowledge now that there were those among us who doubted, who thought his words a sympathetic opinion, but nothing more. How could it be possible that America, leaving her own rich and peaceful country, would side with French ideals rather than with German realities, and would come to our desolate fields, where death was the only harvest? Was it possible that any mere order could improvise an army from one day to the next, and transport it in a mighty fleet across the ocean despite the menace of German ruthlessness?

We were like unbelievers to whom a coming miracle has been announced. We hoped and at the same time we doubted, both hope and doubt springing from our infinite longing. Yes, America would help us—from afar—but would she not be like that other admirable neutral, the moon, which shed her light on our night-watches and our sorrows?

And yet the fateful hour had struck—Justice has her dial as well as her scales.

Our friend, John Felder, beamed with

silent satisfaction. (When one speaks of Americans the word "silent" comes often to one's lips.) His charming wife, from one of the Southern States, offered us tea with gestures and movements even more graceful and rhythmical than usual, and an almost mysterious friendliness shone in her eyes, while her little Southern feet, in their gold slippers, peeped from under her short black frock, tracing upon the carpet a suggestion of some sacred triumphal dance.

As the April afternoon drew toward its close the scent of horse-chestnuts and acacias was wafted up into the room from the street below, together with the subdued noises of Parisian life in spring—the muffled roll of automobiles, bearing belated pleasure-seekers toward the budding foliage of the Bois, the happy cries of children playing under trees starry with flowers. A small group of us were leaning on the balcony, filled with new thoughts and, notwithstanding the war with all its mourning, feeling the peace of the approaching evening, and of the great golden clouds sailing slowly across the clear sky; listening to the children's voices—the voices of our hopes for the future—becoming less and

less frequent as the shadows fell, like the twittering of birds in the branches when twilight closes in.

Our talk was of the one great fact. Like all other French people, we took possession of it as if it had been a victory. America had entered the war! The distant beautiful moon had come down to our bleeding earth and was going into battle by our side—but why?

The old butler, Jean, long past the age of any possible mobilization, went to and fro among us with his tea-tray, his thin lips parted in a beatific smile: he looked discreetly proud, like a family servant at a wedding-feast.

“Well,” said a voice, “do you believe at last? America is as she was in Christopher Columbus’s day—she was foreseen and guessed at then, and you will see that she will again re-establish the equilibrium of the world.”

It was a woman’s voice, clear and full, with a ringing American accent. It was Daisy Folk—“our Daisy,” as we called her, who had been in France for two years, one of the first emissaries from the friendship of America.

And if we had sometimes doubted, she, Daisy, had always believed.

Her mission lay in a little French village, destroyed by fire, a tiny village of Lorraine, on the edge of the forest of Parroy. A generous friend had said to her, "Choose for me, in devastated France, the poorest and most badly wrecked village that you can find," and, as she might in former days have sought our most precious ornament for this same Californian friend, she had now sought out and chosen the village of Vitrimont, and was rebuilding it, stone by stone, living meanwhile among our Lorraine peasants.

"Yes," said this philosopher, "the Old World made us, and now you will see the reflux of the New World upon the Old, in strength, in mental energy, and in affection. And since you have spoken of the moon in referring to us, you will have the phenomena of the tides. You will be sorry that you ever doubted," she went on, "and you will see that, thanks to us, this mystery of war and death will be cleared up."

A flame of faith shone in her eyes. "But it is thanks to you," she added, "that we feel ourselves to-day a nation. Time and history are the only judges who can tell how much each of us has given to the other."

While she spoke I saw again the last evening which I had spent with Daisy, in the rough chamber which she had improvised for herself in the little charred village. We had dined out-of-doors, under a slight shelter of planks which our peasants had put up for her, and as we talked we looked out at the line of the forest waking to life at the touch of Spring. She wore that evening a thin cloak of red gauze over her dark dress, and with her shining black hair, folded close to her head, her clear-cut features, and her determined black eyes, she seemed a strangely picturesque shepherdess for her little Lorraine flock! She took her violin and played an old tune, an air by Rameau; she looked very happy as she said, "I like to play this French music on French soil," while her foot pressed the earth as if she wished to take root. "I love everything in France, her past, her present, and," pointing to the charred and crumbling stones, "the hope which springs from these ruins." And again she said: "I am building new houses for my good people here on the places where their old ones stood; they say I bring them something, but on their side they give me a treasure. I have my heart's desire."

By going into the war would America have her heart's desire? It was permissible to think so as we watched the look of rejoicing and almost of relief on the faces of our new allies. Our hosts on that April evening, who had seen and known the war, had felt neutrality to be an oppression.

Just then Jean appeared at the door with his proud and timid smile, asking us if we would be pleased to go into the long room. There the lantern was being lighted to show the moving pictures, for propaganda by this means was one of our war institutions. We could not claim to have invented it, but during the winter those who had organized the service tried out in the Felders' apartment the films which were to give America true pictures of the war and of France. The long room was already full, the ladies seated, while the men were patiently resigned to standing against the wall. It was a mixed audience, both French and American: young officers and professors just returned from their missions overseas; American nurses, of widely different types—some of them very striking in their military uniforms.

Mrs. H. was there, in a long cape of the same horizon-blue as our soldiers; a very long

veil of the same shade fell in straight folds from a linen band around her head, and from under it her hair made a golden haze on her brow; her full red lips smiled with the pride of youth; she was an archangel of nurses.

Near her were more modest mortals. There was Miss D., hidden in a shadowy corner. "You know her," said Daisy. Yes, I recognized her sweet, ascetic face, with its clear, soft eyes. "You know," Daisy went on, "she has rented and left her delightful house and has come to France to offer herself, with all her resources, for war work, but don't ever speak to her of it, or you will displease her; she only wants to be an anonymous 'sister.'" Here is a young woman journalist, much to the fore, who has, by her own account, millions of readers whom she instructs as to our social work; she is a pronounced and redoubtable feminist, and has made the round of the Mediterranean—Italy, Roumania, the Greek islands during the campaign of the Dardanelles; she has almost fought, and has been torpedoed, swimming for her life (and for her newspaper) in the eddies among the wreckage of her steamer. She wears a Napoleonic cocked hat, is dressed in dark cloth of a sim-

ple and masculine cut, and carries a stout stick in her wiry hand. She is very different from the beautiful archangel, but still it is another form of energy. Close to her is one of her colleagues, a very white and meagre little creature, with pale eyes and a sharp profile; she has sometimes bored us by her obstinate wish to go to the front—she is certainly thinking of it now.

One thing always strikes us in our new allies: one American woman is not in the least like another, except for a trait which they all have in common—their determination to reach the goal which they set for themselves. These birds of passage have strong wings; they know where they are going.

Suddenly it is dark and silent, save for the sharp click of the machine; one scene follows another, as we rehearse, for the benefit of our friends in America, their simple object-lesson. First of all comes Alsace, and let us hope that our friends will trace with a finger, as children do, the outline of the pictures we show them. But, after all, what can they know of our mourning for Alsace and Lorraine, and of our just claim to them? Here is the landscape—forests of young pines smothered in snow,

mountain streams leaping and bounding down into the valleys; villages, one just like another, crowding piously around their churches, chalets with their high cross-beams, and on the steeples and the roofs of the houses, stiffly upright on their nests, those faithful and dear friends, the storks.

Then glimpses of the old French life of Alsace; the entry of the kings of France into Metz, and afterward into Strasbourg; other time-honored proofs that Alsace and France were one; old French names graven on the stones of their cemeteries. After the dead, the living; we see Alsatians who had lived through the rending apart of their country in 1870. From its hiding-place behind the panels of the old wardrobe they take out the flag of France, which has been waiting there through four and forty long years; they shake out its sacred folds, and, almost blinded by emotion, they see it float upon the breeze of France over their liberated valley. We see an old woman, all bent and wrinkled, taking from its worn case the likeness of her husband, a French soldier killed in the war of 1870. She gazes on it, seeming to be listening the while to the deep growling of the cannon disput-

ing over her frail life and her little chalet, scarcely more solid than the stork's nest on its roof. And now we have the entry of the first detachment of French troops into the village; happy groups embrace each other under the exultant flag, and we can almost hear their joyful shouts. The crowd parts, the soldiers are drawn up in line, and General Joffre appears. He salutes the flag, and gives the kiss of France to the little Alsatian girl who comes forward timidly, her face shadowed by her big black head-dress.

The machine still turns, and now we have pictures of the war: the chasseurs Alpins in the Vosges, sliding over the snowy slopes on their skis, or leading long lines of sleds, harnessed to teams of dogs who seem to delight in their work. On the outskirts of a wood big guns lift their heads as if they were trying to get the enemy's scent. It is an impressive sight when two of them belch forth their shells at the same moment. After a quick recoil they slide forward again on their carriages to their former positions, and far away we see a terrific explosion; the earth heaves violently upward and falls back again, while dense, black smoke rises slowly in thick

spirals until it is gradually dispersed and absorbed into the heavy air, where the clouds hang low under a brooding sky. This forward leap of the guns is like the bound of some huge, keen-jawed hound—it is equally supple, equally alive and dangerous—and also equally obedient.

The pictures go on, one after another, until the sharp click of the machine gets upon one's nerves. Now it is a dreary sequence of ruined villages, wrecked churches, dead towns, desolate fields; at a spot where three roads meet a Christ hanging on his cross is alone in the upturn and deserted countryside. After that we have the sea—the Atlantic Ocean, with its long, slow swell. On the horizon a black dot appears, very small at first, but growing gradually larger, and followed by a trail of smoke; we can make out a steamer, rolling and pitching, but steadily going on. It is the *Rochester*, the first vessel to leave America after the infamous German announcement that every keel afloat, without exception, would be torpedoed. All the German sharks, warned of her sailing, are lying in wait for her under the waves, but she manages to elude their jaws, going on and on until at last

she enters the port of Bordeaux, to be greeted by cheering, and formally welcomed by an official committee, largely made up of bright-faced girls bearing great bunches of roses. The young captain stands smiling, evidently amused, and shakes the hands outstretched to him vigorously; we can see him laugh. To him the sensational crossing has clearly been good sport.

All this passes quickly, with the jerky staccato movement of the cinema, and now we have Salonica, a white city crowned with cupolas, and, to all appearance, smiling and happy, as all Mediterranean cities are when seen from that enchanted sea. On its waterfront French and English regiments are marching to the music of their bands. And now we are in the valley of the Vardar, and in the olive-orchards and under the huge cork-trees the big guns recoil, leap forward and bark, as they did under the pines of Alsace. The same explosion, the same black spirals, the same acrid smoke slowly dispersing in the clear eastern light; the dry Greek earth shows the sinuous line of trenches. How much alike all war is! Always the same soldiers, in blue or in khaki, working at the same tasks, like a

new order of humanity, devoted only to the new world-business of warfare; always the same holes in the ground, the same growling of guns, near or distant, the same proud groups around generals who give decorations to their men and kiss the flags.

The earth is a great globe turning at our touch as the show goes on. Here is a crowd of diminutive Japanese, working like ants in one of their munition factories; again we have myriads of shells, neatly piled, while the guns roar over the heads of small soldiers belonging to a race which we used to look upon as the most astonishing playthings in the world, often diverting and sometimes mysteriously menacing. Now they are our allies, working and creating with us the mighty rhythm of the European War. In the little wooden houses, behind the paper windows, the women of Nippon, crouching on their spotless mats, follow the story of the war in the English newspapers.

Now the landscape is all white; there are ice-floes in gray water; the sky is pale and cold, and again we see steamers, this time pitching and rolling in a heavy and half-frozen sea. They will land shells, always more shells,

on the Murman coast, the black smoke rises lazily from the engine waiting for them on the little railway. And at the end we are back again in America; in the virgin forests negro wood-cutters sing as their blows fall; the mighty trunks, which have held their own against the storms of centuries, shiver throughout their length and bow themselves with a sound of cracking and rending, until at last they crash to the ground, as if astonished that they must die. It is war carried into the very sanctuaries where we were used to worship the silent and everlasting forces of nature.

Memory carried me back to Africa. I saw again the wide yellow sands, the sun-baked fields, hedged with cactus, the stretches of plain where a scanty growth of corn struggled for life, the welcome groups of trees, so few and so beautiful that one saw them from afar across the rolling stretches of bare earth, waiting to soothe the weary traveller in the purple shade at their feet. In the still air, palpitating with heat, the great aloe plants lifted their fantastic flowers, as tall and regular as Jacob's ladder; flocks of storks sailed by; biblical shepherds played on slender pipes,

making a sound as thin and clear as a bird's call.

Yet war is there also, arousing a people who seemed to us to be sunk in a never-ending slumber, dreaming only of the joys of their paradise. These scenes, as I say, were reproduced for me by the cinema of my memory. Could it be that in those remote Moroccan villages, whose inhabitants seemed as ignorant of the mighty drama of history as a hive of bees, there was weeping and lamentation over sons and bridegrooms summoned to the war in far-off France, from which they might never return? Would little Ladifé never see her Miloud again? Was the Musulman cemetery not to be the everlasting resting-place of the Moroccan soldier fallen in the fields of the Ourcq? And yet he wore a powerful talisman around his neck, and his old mother had made long pilgrimages on foot, and had hung bags full of prayers on the branches of the sacred olive-tree. The majestic Lebanon, which we had seen in other days bathing its historic slopes in the Mediterranean, and lifting its triumphant crest against the Asian sky—was it also shaken by the convulsion of war? Could it be true that the smiling and

gentle tribes, smoking their narghilehs while they waited confidently for the aid of France, had been forced to feel the choking grip of Turkey and Germany, and to suffer famine and death? Was it possible that all around this flower-garden of the Mediterranean, intended for the world's delight, men and women were in the grasp of sterner emotions than those caused by the sudden enchantment of spring, or the heavy perfume of orange-flowers and tuberose?

Happy are they who have seen, or at least imagined, the real face of our Mother Earth—to whom the names of oceans, of rivers, and of countries are not merely words printed on a sheet of colored paper. What we have seen our eyes possess forever, and can enjoy until all light goes out from them—and perhaps thereafter.

The cinema has stopped; the object-lesson of the war is over; we have seen what it was well for us to see, as children are told as much of life as is good for them to know; in both cases the darker secrets are withheld—we have not seen death, nor even acute suffering. The lamps are lit again. There are newcomers, women and girls in khaki, with

short skirts and felt hats, masculine even to the chin-straps. Strength, strength again—their eyes meet ours as frankly and coolly as those of young soldiers; their hand-shake is short and businesslike. Miss S. tells me that she has charge of a motor ambulance belonging to a hospital where all the staff, both surgeons and physicians, are women—"all women—no men," she repeats, with a touch of pride. Yes, a touch of pride—and yet I could not help feeling within myself a slight and half-unconscious resistance. I could not help thinking: "They may all be 'women' at the hospital, but there is something not quite 'woman' in the clean-cut features at which I am gazing; they seem to have been turned out, at one stroke, by the hand of a skilful artist. Miss S. has the impeccable precision of an instrument which is well-made, carefully polished, and adjusted to form part of a great machine—but it is an instrument after all." And so we men and women look at one another; our hearts are open to a new friendship, we stretch out our hands—and then sometimes, for no real reason, from the merest trifle, a chance word, even a glance, we come up against some old prejudice, some ancestral

idea, reaching back to the twilight of time. In our minds we have long exalted two different types of womanhood—the woman capable of loving with all her heart, and the Madonna—each on her own altar. These modern girls have stepped down from the altars on which sacrifices were offered to women—and on which they were often themselves sacrificed. All is broad daylight in these young heads, full of democratic and liberal ideas, and yet this new type is in its turn dragging and pushing the ponderous machine of life in time of war.

“Will you introduce me to Mrs. B.?” said a young French priest, the Abbé F. He wore around his neck the chain and cross of the French military chaplains, and on his head a police cap with two rows of braid. Of Irish extraction, he is to start to-morrow for the United States, in order to speak to Irishmen on behalf of France. He is taking down the names of bishops to whom he may have access, and makes a special note (with a view to his possible conversion) of a dignitary of the church, who, being under the influence of Bernstorff’s agents, denounced France in the Catholic cathedral of New York City as “the sink of the world.”

The Irish question, according to the Abbé F., does not concern England only, for in the United States the Catholic clergy, whose ranks are largely recruited from the Irish, are active and influential. During the two years and a half that American neutrality lasted, German propaganda had the field almost to itself and sowed many mines therein, trusting to their exploding later; there is great need of mine-sweeping, which is not an easy job, as the Germans were careful to foment the political and racial hostilities which have existed between England and Ireland for centuries, while France was condemned as irreligious, being represented to Catholic Americans as a light woman, who had thrown her Phrygian cap to the winds, and renounced the principles and traditions of her family in order to plunge into vice. The chastisement which awaited her, according to these good prophets, was that of Don Juan. Her courage was not to be denied, but it was the courage of the atheist before the Commander's statue, mocking and defiant. To corroborate this verdict a few of our loosest novels (largely written for the foreign market) were distributed as tracts and our Puritan judges were virtu-

ously shocked. The Commander (who was, of course, the Kaiser) would force the atheist, step by step, to his death. The picture was easy to draw, and at a distance of three thousand miles all the complicated strokes which go to make up a true image are invisible.

Just there the door opened again, and a dozen young men came in, one after another, so young that they looked like a band of students. After speaking to our hostess they were introduced to us as a group. All Americans, they appeared to resemble each other because of the look in their faces, which was uniformly bright and careless, with the ready smile of youth. They had come that very day from Belgium and the invaded districts of France, where they had been stationed for more than two years.

"The delegates of the C. R. B." Thus they were presented to us, "C. R. B." standing for "Commission for Relief in Belgium," and, by extension, the invaded north of France.

At that time the melancholy processions of refugees had not yet brought home to us the overwhelming impression of our invaded country. These few Americans were among the first to bring us their testimony; some had

lived for months, even for years, in our occupied provinces, others had actually seen the invasion, followed the resistance made to it, and touched with their fingers (unable to do more than give a little nourishment) the gag thrust by our enemies into the throats of nine and a half millions of Belgians and French, which would have stifled even their cries of hunger if the C. R. B. had not been organized, and had not taken up the task of making it possible for these people, if not to live, in any proper sense of the word, at least to endure.

"The C. R. B.," said Harder, introducing himself, "only represents initials in the complicated alphabet of war, for I don't believe you have read the statistics given in our big blue reports."

"No," said the beautiful archangel, "there are too many figures."

"Well," said Harder, "the story of the C. R. B. is almost as long as the war. Some of us were already in Belgium when it began, and others came there in the first days. We were neutrals then, and the great and tragic spectacle attracted us. We had a chance to see the famous German organization, and

also to see the Belgian resistance; we could go from one side to the other, counting and judging the strokes and counter-strokes like umpires. We had mingled feelings, but curiosity and love of excitement were uppermost. To like the sight of combatants, whether they be bulls or cocks or men, is a natural masculine appetite, and so is a taste for danger. Besides that, we felt great pity, and we hoped to be able to make ourselves useful in transporting and caring for the wounded. But above all was the longing to see and to know what was happening in Europe, where the nations were devouring each other. I sailed from New York with eight hundred Germans who were going back to Germany to take their places in the army. They all looked exactly alike; they had the same sporting clothes, the same cassowary feathers in their felt hats, although they came from all the different States; they all sang the same patriotic songs, as if they had all left the same school that very morning. One saw immediately what was meant by the German military system, and—since I am giving you the first impressions of a neutral—let me say that the effect was rather fine. They came, thus unit-

ed, from large and small towns in all our States; from banks, factories, and shops, like a regiment hastening, with colors flying and music playing, to answer the first appeal of the Fatherland. Being Germans and soldiers, they purposely ignored every one on board who was not a German and a soldier; the student scars on many of their faces made them seem to wear the stigmata of war already, as if they were dedicated as a race to bloodshed. But the war was short so far as they were concerned. We saw them exchange uneasy looks when the wireless telegraph crackled overhead, for they well knew that English and French patrol boats were watching the liners for such passengers as they. One day a delegation of them went to ask our Dutch captain if he would not go back to New York. He had told them honestly that French and English cruisers were drawing uncomfortably near, and they preferred to return to their counters and desks rather than take the chance of an internment camp for the duration of the war. I saw the delegation coming out of the captain's cabin, and they did not look happy. The steamer had a cargo for Rotterdam, and could not turn

back. On our seventh day out the warriors and ourselves were waked by what we civilians thought was a clap of thunder—I was not yet familiar with gun-fire! A French patrol boat was so close to us that I could read her name, *La Savoie*. The signal to stop floated from her mast, and her eight pretty little guns were turned on us. A French officer came with the utmost politeness to take possession of us. As he stepped on the deck he gravely saluted the ladies, who were sitting, considerably excited, in their deck chairs, and this salute amused me so much that I made a note of it, for since the eight hundred Germans had started on their campaign not one cassowary plume had bowed itself before the feminine sex.

“The affair was soon over, and we had only to follow the little patrol boat as a whale follows a sardine which he cannot snap up. That was our sudden entrance into war; the *Savoie*, with the eyes of her guns looking at us all the time, led us to Brest, and all along the coast of France we saw mysterious and intelligent signal-lights sending the news from one station to another of the capture and of our passing. At Brest our eight hundred fellow

passengers, now prisoners for as long as the war should last, left us. We saw them going off toward the shore, still singing; song is one of the forces drawing them together. We were told that they were to be interned in a little Breton fishing village.

“A few days later,” Harder went on, “I was in Berlin, for I went into the war from the German end, and I am glad of it, for I am sure now of what I know”—and he clinched his hands. “In Berlin I saw the joyous side of war; it was a sword-dance, if you choose, but the rhythm was lively, if somewhat fierce, and I say again without hesitation that it was imposing. The joy was universal; every German seemed to be fulfilling his destiny. There was no need for them to read Treitschke or Bernhardi, whose formulas had been mixed with their mothers’ milk and with the first meat of their childhood, and had become part of their flesh and blood. The pride of war was everywhere. Officers with measured tread and heads held high superintended the departure of the troops from the railway-stations, like noblemen who had not only the authority of their rank in the army but that of the ruling class to which they belonged. One saw the prole-

tarians of war led by its rulers—the proletariat being glad to obey and trained to enthusiasm. The streets were gay with banners, flags, and patriotic posters, the crowded theatres glorified the Fatherland and the war. To be sure, as the trains went off one did see women's faces drawn with anguish."

"Yes," said Daisy, "I also have seen that. When the war began I went from London to Berlin in order to take home some German girls who had been staying in England, and to bring back English girls who had been studying in Berlin. Germania was like an old mother whose sons are leaving her in order to make splendid marriages; they were sure to return to her richer than they went, bringing beautiful brides of high lineage."

"We all of us felt as if we were in a precocious springtime," Harder went on. "I cannot express the sensation in the language of war or of politics; one has to use terms descriptive of life, of nature, in order to explain the excitement throughout Germany. The people were like bees who had been waiting until it was time to swarm: at last the earth was covered with flowers ready to be plundered."

"And if one tried to talk at a table d'hôte, or

in one of the private houses in which I was received, this first impression was confirmed and strengthened; collective enthusiasm is strange to us Americans, because as a nation we are independent and even self-contained.

“Officers, professors, shopkeepers, all recited in the same manner their lesson from the Bible of War. Some had taught, others had learned it, but the matter was the same. The sacred book of their national life was open, and in it were inscribed their animosities, their claims, and their hopes. Every one had his own historic view of the war, if I may call it so, looking back for centuries over the life of the many little German states which had been in the shadow, made unhappy by jealousies, and oppressed by unjust wars.

“Nobody mentioned Serbia, nor the Russian mobilization, nor even the French air-raids over Nuremberg—the *casus belli*, real or imaginary, did not lie there. In the taverns, thick with pipe-smoke, we talked of the Thirty Years’ War with rapier-scarred students or professors, while the foam on our tall beer-mugs sank down, its bubbles softly breaking. Each speaker was the mouthpiece of a Germany both strong and vindictive,

which had been for centuries deprived of a seat at the banquet of civilization through the injustice of fate. They had long been metaphorically hungry and thirsty within the limits of Prussia; there were black pages in their chronicles to be effaced. During the Thirty Years' War, to which they constantly recurred, their population had been reduced from twenty millions to four. If you had seen their frowning brows and the gleam of hate in their eyes, the eyes of men used to poring over books and seeing life through the medium of printed words, you would have said that they themselves had seen and suffered in this time of misery and humiliation; they were like men who have been cheated out of their youth and want revenge in their later years. And then they spoke of Napoleon and Jena, trembling with anger; they might have been the students who sharpened their sabres in 1806 on the steps of the French Legation. In 1870 Germany soldered together the fragments of her broken sword, 'Nothung,' or Necessity, a blade of divine origin. Now, at last, this sword would cut its way through the forest which awaited it, full of spring and the singing of birds. Their

myths were always present to their minds, as well as their history; they thought equally of the Rhinegold and of the Basin of Briey. I saw them in their beer-halls, terribly realistic and also often terribly poetic, justifying Truth by Fable. And with all that, biblical; the idea of the 'chosen people' was in their heads, clouded by symbolism and by the hope of revenge. The German nation were the children of Israel, chosen and cherished by the God of vengeance, and their vocation was to conquer the Promised Land. They betrayed themselves without meaning to, and were not careful to conceal that they spoke as aggressors. There was no question then of 'the war that was forced upon us'; war was the outward flowering, so to speak, of their inward growth, with roots deep in the soil and full of sap. War justified and explained itself by their convictions as to the past and the future.

"The air grew blue and heavy with pipe-smoke, mingled with the fumes of annals and fables; there were long silences, while the beer was slowly digesting. I watched these strong, ruddy German faces grow more peaceful and almost sleepy; I'm thinking particularly while

I speak of two professors, who gradually became kind and even sympathetic.

“Yes, this affair of Belgium was certainly very sad, but one must make up one’s mind to it. In order to build up the wonderful new Germany some old nests had to be destroyed; there was some shooting, of course—that was war; there were outcries from women and children and from fanatical and superstitious priests—but why did these birds, with their useless chirping, attempt to stand angrily on the edges of their nests? Poor little Belgium, poor France; they gasped, they suffered, but they were not meant to die. They would only undergo a metempsychosis; the soul of Germany would replace their own. The Germans did not hate them; it was a case of ‘Nothung,’ Necessity, leading the German nation on. German politics became, in their own words, a ‘Weltanschauung,’ religious as well as political. Sprung from the old Teutonic gods, the Germans laid claim to the earth, and their bellicose reveries were accompanied by German orchestras, giving them that splendid German music, where the most vehement passion is curbed by the most exact rhythm, and where the incomprehensible and the in-

expressible are explained with a logic which borders on inspiration."

"Confess," said Mrs. Felder, tapping the floor with her little golden foot at this tribute to German music, "confess that you admired these men."

"Certainly," replied Harder. "I was not a judge, I was only an investigator, come from another planet, and this mixture of reality, poetry, prophetic spirit, and calculation interested me greatly. And as I was then a war correspondent, I was filled with desire to see the oncoming of the mighty tidal wave. By October I was in Antwerp. Only we neutrals were able to see, in such a short lapse of time, both of the faces shown by the war. Brussels was already occupied, but Antwerp not yet, and I was there when the attack came. At first the sound of the great German marine guns, as they hammered at the outer forts, sounded dull and far off, but it grew nearer and louder, until they seemed, like Jupiter Tonans, bent on deafening us. The confidence which the city had placed in the 'indestructible' forts gave way to anxiety and distress. I remembered what my tavern-prophets had said over their beer-

mugs. They must have been reminded of the walls of Jericho falling when the trumpets of the 'chosen people' were blown before them.

"The defense of the Antwerp forts was as unavailing as that of Jericho's walls. You have all heard and read of the exodus of the population, but I may speak of it, for I have not read of it, but have seen it. Ought I not to say, as a good newspaper correspondent," he added with a smile, "that I have 'lived it'? But it was enough to see it, and if I had not been so recently in Berlin I should have had only one side of a great experience. The noise was like the cracking of a world falling to pieces—I thought of what the professor had said about the old nests—but one did not do much thinking. Fires had broken out on every side, and although our eyes were full of horrors we were curious to see the great reservoirs of petroleum burning in the red night. Huge black columns of smoke rose in the sharp October air, and billows of purple flame blotted out the sky. One saw only desolation and flight—the flight of a whole people." . . . Here Harder interrupted himself, as if he feared to show personal feeling. Americans are always on their guard! It

was growing late; the windows were closed and old Jean's careful hands had drawn the blue curtains over them; the only lamp in the large room threw its white light over the turquoise-blue of the chairs; a tapestry showing a fantastic hunting-scene hung on one of the walls, and in the shadow its figures seemed to come to life; an impatient stag thrust his antlers into an autumnal tree.

"Please stay where you are," said Mrs. Felder, in a tone of authority, "and Jean shall bring tea and sandwiches if we are hungry." And at the same time, in her very gracious and feminine manner, with her sad and somewhat enigmatic smile, she bade good-by to some of her guests. Five or six of us, including John Felder, stayed with Daisy around the hearth, which in this mild evening was full of flowering azaleas. With her light and measured step she went to the door and closed it, as if to show that we were her prisoners. Then she sat down, her slender hands beating a measure on her knees.

"Go on," she said.

"I obey," Harder answered, yielding with his young smile to her feminine insistence. He hesitated for a second, and then went on.

“You know our mothers used sometimes to tell us of the end of the world, and what a noise it would make, and we sometimes thought of it; but what nobody could imagine, and what it is impossible to tell, is the suffering. For my own part I had no idea of what this war was, and was going to be, until I saw that exodus of poor people flying with Death behind them, striking at them as they went. On the 28th of September the Forts of Waelhem and Wavre fell, and on the 29th Fort Lierre, then Fort Koningshoyckt, and on the 7th of October the King, the Belgian government officials, and the foreign legations went across the Scheldt and made their way to the coast of France. From all the villages lying between the forts and the city fugitives came pouring in with their cattle and their carts. They had faith in Antwerp, their citadel, so they camped in the open squares or wherever they could find shelter. In the evening of the 7th notices signed by General Guise were posted on the walls of the town, to warn those who meant to leave that they had better start, and that those remaining should take refuge in cellars. The fugitives made for the Scheldt. Rafts, lighters,

ferry-boats, fishing-smacks—everything which could float upon the water was soon dangerously full, and the river, with all its branches, was covered in a few hours with these frail floating houses.

“The Belgian army crossed the bridges, going to the west, toward Waes; in the intervals between black darkness and sudden light, between sinister silence and explosions, followed by the sound of crumbling walls and cries rising from the river, the danger became more and more imminent. Only the imagination of painters has ever given any idea of such terrors. The boats, knocking one against the other, made their way heavily to the Dutch shore, but they could not carry all the crowd; there were tangled masses of fugitives on foot on the east bank of the river. They hurried along, pushing before them their carts, their cattle, and an extraordinary number of baby-carriages, laden with packages, with the fine Flemish babies perched on top, frightened, astonished, but quiet. There were frequent stops for a moment, and then I could hear the cooing and caressing murmur of the young mothers as they bent over these strange cradles of the exodus. I recognized the lint-

white hair and the placid look of the Flemish infants who are shown in their mothers' arms in pictures of the kermesses. These babies were just like them—fair, rather heavy and unwieldy, with big heads under tight-fitting caps. I did not then understand Flemish, and the mingled voices only meant to me a cry of fright. In the crush some mothers had lost the children who were clinging to their skirts: 'Mudder! Mudder! Brennen! Gebrannt!' Those were the only words at all like German that I could distinguish. With their flying yellow hair the young women seemed to have around them a reflection of the flames which had driven them from home. The road to Holland was still bordered by its tall poplars; little mills on the flat fields still stretched out their idle sails; there were corners of the countryside still untouched, like an old engraving which has been saved from a fire.

"Next day was the 9th, and the silence of death was over Antwerp; it was a broken and empty shell. One heard only the howling of hungry dogs, forgotten in the deserted houses. Then I saw the great German parade, the tidal wave—I had missed it at Brussels. I watched it with the curious eyes of a neutral

and a war correspondent; it pleased me to make myself a judge between the irresistible onrush of a plethoric body which announced that it was cruel and unjust after the manner of divine nature and the little nation which was covering with its neutral and almost naked body its neighbor, France.

“I went with a companion, an American like myself, to a window from which we could see the advancing Germans. The impression of numbers and force was overpowering. As far as we could see the same gray flood was spreading, uninterrupted, regular and silent, like all other great floods. I thought of those mystic words which I had heard pronounced at Berlin, about the ‘vocation’ of the German people, and their ‘destiny.’ Their day had come—they were advancing like a great brazen serpent, with all its folds uncoiled, slipping forward to take possession of the earth. In speaking of themselves the Germans showed their overweening pride by using the mighty Bible images to describe their own ambition. They liked to think they were Messianic figures, but their Messiah was force.

“Having seen them at a distance we saw them later close at hand, as they passed, regi-

ment after regiment, down the broad streets of Antwerp. Except for the heavy rumbling of trucks and ammunition-wagons, the only sound was the heavy tramp of men's boots, pounding on the pavement. One gray pack after the other they went forward, stopped, turned the corners of streets, obeying the strident orders which tore through the air like a whip-lash.

"The whole army passed, the men and their complete equipment: guns, caissons, camions, each regiment followed by its moving kitchen, with smoke coming from the chimneys. After the odor of burning houses we were to have the smell of German soup. That was meant for a humorous touch. The soldiers sat on the kitchen-wagons, swinging their legs, laughing and pretending to offer the unctuous steam of their meat to the closed windows above them. Their officers, whether on horseback or afoot, directed their men with the stiffness of automata, and this was accentuated by the unusual number of belts and straps with which they were accoutred. Almost all had on their chests an electric lamp connected with a little electric battery in their saddle-bag, and when night fell they amused

themselves by making its light blaze out from their bodies. Perhaps they thought themselves modern replicas of the Cyclops, and that this uncommon eye was at the same time fabulous and original.

“For two whole days the wave rolled on. Here you call the invaders Huns and Barbarians, but if you had seen them as we did it would be enough to say Germans. It is a mistake to think that they are primitive hordes, with a lust for slaughter; with them relentlessness is a calculated result, methodically taught and reduced to rule, as torture was in the Middle Ages. Their conception of war is an amazing combination of an almost candid idealism and a realism which is nothing short of voracious, and they carry it out by applying the same exact method to vast masses of men, and by inculcating in these masses, when they are formed into armies, a national egotism which amounts to a cold and systematic fanaticism—a fanaticism kept in order by a corporal.”

“When we say Boche or Barbarian or Hun,” interrupted Daisy, “it is because we are trying to find a new name for an invisible enemy who seems to be everywhere, like evil or

pain. In 1870 the soldiers and the people called the Germans 'Prussians.'"

"And when we say Huns," said Mrs. Felder, "we are only giving them the name of something accursed; we speak of them as the old Egyptians did of the locusts and the pestilence—they are a plague."

"Well," Harder went on, "let us say that they are a plague, and it is quite correct that their dense gray masses are like a swarm of fierce migrating locusts. I call the insects fierce because their vast numbers and their voracious appetites make them formidable; I have more than once taken two or three of them in my hand and found them quite harmless. Our duties in the C. R. B. brought us into contact with some officers who were almost good-natured. We had to arrange with them about feeding the starving people; you should have heard them, fathers of families themselves, talk genially about 'my population,' as if there was no cause for anything but good-will between the inhabitants and the invaders. They were only carrying out orders, and we felt that they would have shown the same zeal—indeed, they acknowledged it—if the command had been to shoot

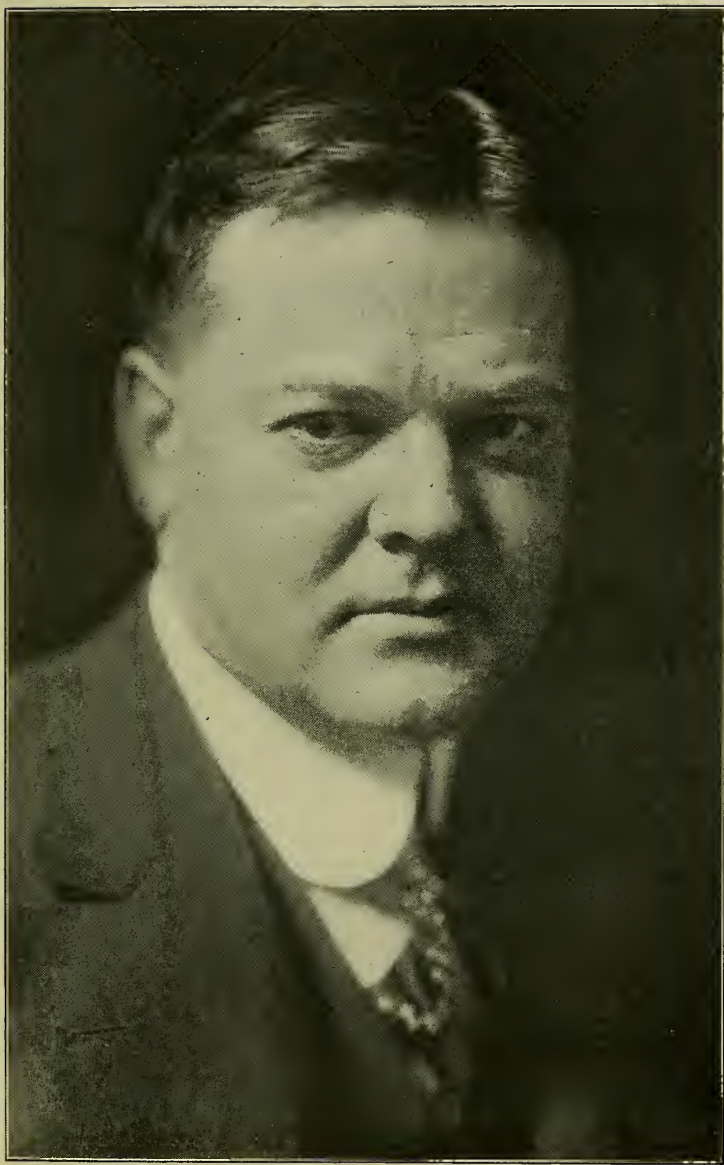
the same people; or else at the sound of a whistle, without changing countenance, they would have 'ordered the sack.'"

"'Ordered the sack,'" said Mrs. Felder, tapping the blue carpet with her impatient foot, "I don't know that French expression."

"You will find it in all the memoirs of the sixteenth century," said Harder, "and you may be sure that the Germans have neat lists in their files of all the sacks which have taken place in the terrible wars of past centuries. To 'order the sack' is to turn over a city or village to the cupidity and bestiality of the soldiery. The sack was ordered at Malines, at Louvain, and at Aerschot. Those who gave the abominable order did not themselves carry it out, and those who did could always plead that they were obliged to obey, and in this way the German theory of collective irresponsibility was upheld."

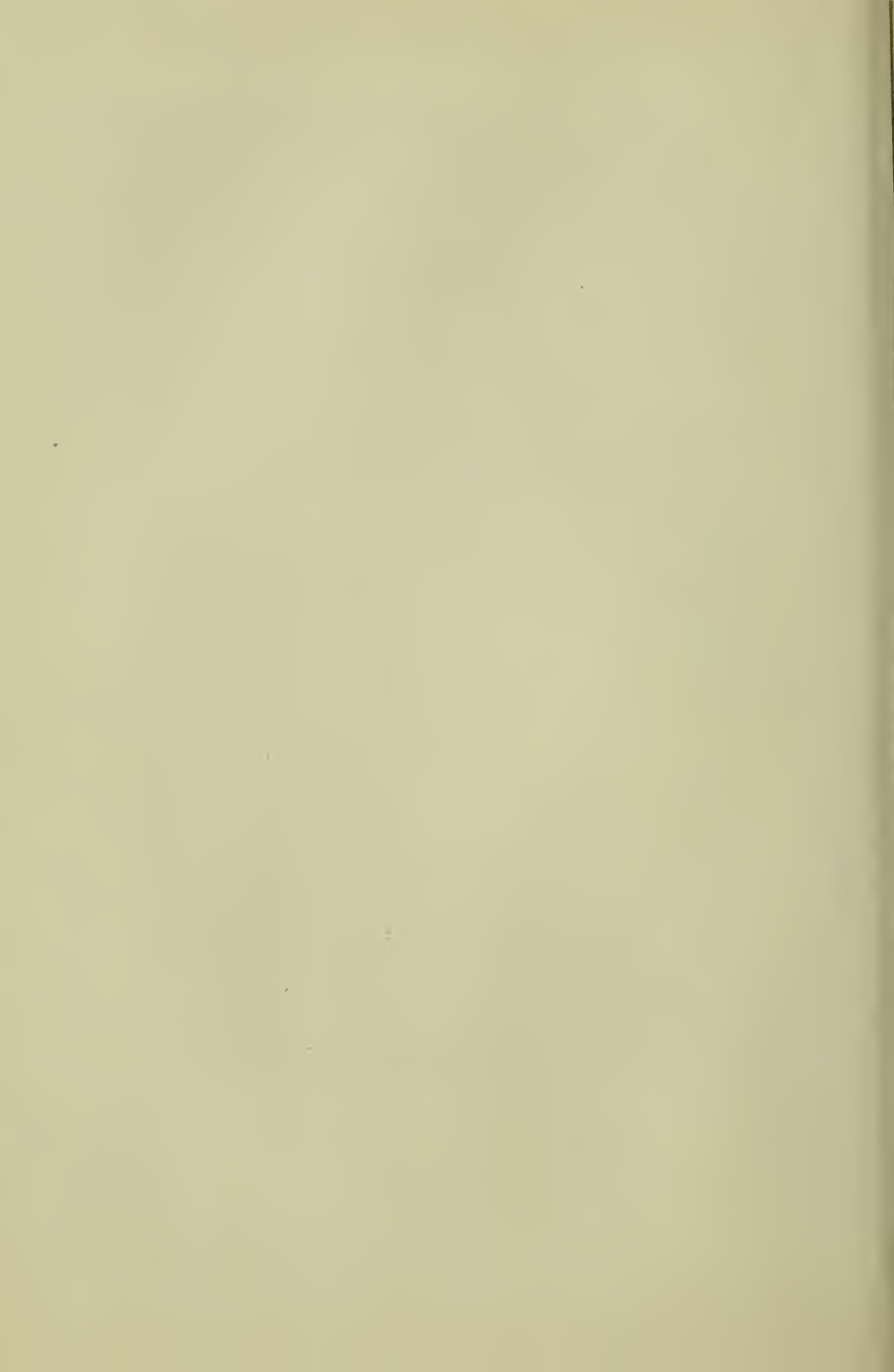
"But then," said Mrs. Felder, "if they are going to search through old books to find examples of cruelty in the past, they might just as well burn women as witches, or condemn people to the stake if they happen to hold different opinions."

"That is pretty nearly correct," Harder



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Herbert Hoover, President of the C. R. B.
(Commission for the Relief of Invaded Belgium and France.)



answered. "It is perfectly true that if we look hard enough we can find justification for almost anything in some old record or other."

"Let us go back to the locusts," said Mrs. Felder, "and tell us more about them. When once they had descended on Belgium, did they eat up all the food there was?"—and she spread out her fingers nervously, as if to avoid touching the insects.

"Exactly," answered Harder, looking at his excited questioner with the characteristic little smile which drew up the corners of his lips. "And that is where the story of our C. R. B. begins."

"Oh, but we don't want to hear it yet," cried Mrs. Felder. "We want more of your confession as a neutral, that is much more interesting this evening. We want to know what you thought of the Belgians after you had seen the people whom you call Germans, but which I shall continue to call Huns, Barbarians, and locusts."

"Ah," said Harder, "that's a long story, and I'm afraid I shall be obliged to speak of the C. R. B., for without it there would have been no more Belgians—they would have been exterminated by famine. And since we have

mentioned old forms of torture, I may say that Belgium and the north of France were confined in an iron cage; the Germans held the padlock, and nothing could get through the bars, not even a letter or a bit of bread.

“Draw a line around the front, extend it along the length of the German frontiers, and within it you will have the prison district of the war. Almost no one was allowed to enter or to know it except the delegates of the C. R. B., and within that circle of steel ten millions of living souls asked themselves every day the heart-sickening question: ‘Shall we die of hunger?’ Supplies arrived constantly from Germany for the troops, but they were sacred; they were to feed the chosen people, the armies of the Lord of Hosts. Not a grain of German wheat went into a French or Flemish mouth; we were only able to arrange that the inhabitants should have what was grown on their own soil. You may imagine how much could be raised in an invaded country, and on ground over which the German armies marched forward and back all the time. In Belgium the armies moved on, but in France they remained and grew ever larger; millions of combatants overspread the occu-

pied provinces. How the French managed to keep alive until our food supplies could reach them must remain one of those mysteries of French vitality to which we are only too apt to apply the comfortable word 'miraculous.'

"Belgium was the first to suffer; the first requisitions squeezed her dry. Her industrial riches were very great, but for that very reason she did not produce much; she was a factory hand, buying her bread instead of baking it. All the Belgian industries stopped at once. The miners no longer went down into the bowels of the earth and in a few days the evil of enforced idleness was added to all the others. It is true that Germany suffered, or was going to suffer, from the blockade, but she put her utmost energy into making the most of her resources, and at the same time she exhausted or ruined the territory which she had seized. At one time she asserted the right of the strong when she requisitioned supplies, and at another she pleaded weakness, in order to get out of dealing with the food problem. The argument was simple; since England had blockaded her ports Germany was like the garrison of a besieged fortress; she had barely enough for herself. It is

true that she opened stores for the sale of provisions, but only Germans were allowed to enter and buy, and in the autumn of 1914, as the unemployed Belgian workmen stood in line waiting their turn at the municipal canteens, they could see piles of sauerkraut and garlands of sausages behind the brightly lighted windows of the German stores. But these delicatessen were not for Belgians. They were, it is true, helped by their own countrymen—landowners, bankers, merchants, manufacturers—all the rich Belgians, to sum them up in a word. And they were splendid; they led their people through the desert, as Moses did the Hebrews of old. You know how much civic pride this little Belgian nation has always had. It is a historical tradition with them.

“At Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, Malines, Liège, and other towns, down to the smallest, well-organized charitable associations were in existence long before the war, supported and harmoniously administered by members of all classes and creeds, nobility, bourgeoisie, Catholics, and liberals. Therefore, when it became necessary, their canteens and soup-kitchens were speedily enlarged, in order to give relief

to the ever-increasing number of the unemployed. And when I use that term I do not mean only factory hands and miners; the invasion stopped a whole population short in whatever work it was doing, whether professional or manual.

“It was not only the working classes who suffered, but out of respect for the misery which shrinks from notice I will say no more. Conditions were entirely different from those of a strike in time of peace, for which a workman or artisan might be supposed to be more or less prepared. In many cases the man was in the prime of life, and usually the father of a large family. He lived in one of those Belgian villages which we can all remember, with little houses pressed close together beside the broad highway, each with its glossy roof, shining windows, and tiny garden gay with hollyhocks, geraniums, or tulips. These houses represented Flemish cleanliness, healthfulness, and a certain amount of leisure. What was the daily life of the families who lived in them? Early in the morning the father went off to his work in factory or mine by one of the little tramway lines which held the industrial life of Belgium together. His wife, the ‘housewife,’

who had also been up since daylight, pulled her provision of vegetables from the little garden and prepared the soup. Milk, eggs, and meat were all reasonably cheap, and the chubby children could have their fill of thickly buttered bread. Clothing was warm and shoes substantial; life in Belgium had long been comfortable, and the winters, with their gray skies and steady rains, made comforts necessary. To be prosperous was the national habit of Flanders. If Flemish art is redundant, giving us a picture of national manners which is almost always gay, and sometimes overvigorous, it is not from any tradition or preference on the part of the artists. These rollicking junketers of Teniers, with their rubicund noses; the crowds at a kermesse pressing around a table piled with succulent victuals; the shouts of laughter which we can almost hear, the universal jollity—all show the delight in life of a healthy and well-fed people.

“I remembered all that as I watched the Belgians of to-day, menaced with starvation as if they were so many famine-struck Hindoos. At Antwerp especially, when I saw the unemployed workmen standing on their doorsteps still smoking their pipes but with their

hands hanging idly at their sides, I thought: 'These are of the same race as the men who saw Rubens.' The signs of suffering had already begun to show; their clothes hung loosely on their stout bodies, they dragged their feet as they walked, and their eyes were dull and listless. The 'rich,' the masters of industry, had ceased to be able to support the soup-kitchens and canteens. It was no longer a question of money; the circle had closed around Belgium, and her stores were used up. The time had come when it was absolutely essential to make an opening through which foodstuffs could come, no matter how much they cost. I will not tell you how we managed it, for that would make me talk too much about ourselves," he said, looking at his companions. "The Germans were always ready to explain just why they had gone to war. The Belgians said little, but, as we shared their imprisonment, we grew to appreciate the nobility of their resistance and the extent of their sacrifices. We remembered their past history, with its obstinate struggles for freedom; we saw the glorious records of their national art in the churches and the Hôtel de Ville of Antwerp, and understood as we had

never done before what an inspiration it is to a country to have been capable of producing great art. It is rather characteristic of us Americans," with another glance at his fellow countrymen, "and a curious and enlightening experience, to begin to know a country through its art. When we go to Europe we have already in our minds an idealized consciousness of what your old countries gave to history while we were yet unborn, and we are even more acutely aware than you are, if you will allow me to say so, of how great a part so small a country as Belgium has had not only in making history but in adding beauty to the world."

"Belgium is like a little shell which has produced a splendid pearl," said Daisy.

"Indeed, yes," said Harder. "Of course I was obliged to admire the German armies and the German administration, but this pearl, gleaming with the iridescence of centuries, which they wished to crush, seemed to me infinitely more beautiful and precious. I loved Antwerp, and as I wandered about its old quarters I thought all the time of Rubens, for Antwerp is his city. Four of his large engravings hung on the walls of my father's study, and he also had many prints in portfolios.

When I was a schoolboy, many a time he showed and explained them to me during the long hours of orthodox Protestant Sundays, and as he passed his fingers in a light caress over their flowing lines I could hear him say to himself: 'There is nothing greater.' That is one of the memories of my childhood.

"At the time I did not know just what he meant, but when we are grown we understand what in childhood we only feel. I hope I shall not offend my compatriots by saying that there is not much artistic beauty in America; we are, therefore, all the more appreciative of whatever brings us, from afar, visions which are lacking in our daily life. I was especially attracted by Flemish art because it could be either dashing and impetuous or tenderly simple and homely; and the Belgians whom I saw overwhelmed by misfortune were not to me only a small nation almost annihilated by heavy artillery, as ants might be by a heavy foot; they belonged to a people who had had a soul, and who had it still."

"What do you mean by their 'soul'?" asked Mrs. Felder.

"The soul of a people," said Harder, "is that spirit which enables them, whether great

or small, to create something which is their own, and only theirs. If a nation has done that it acquires thereby a grandeur, in a spiritual sense, which is a sort of consecration."

"It is true," said Daisy, "that we speak more often of the soul of a small nation than of a greater one—we say 'the soul of Greece' more often than 'the soul of Rome.'"

"That is because a great nation," said Harder, "has usually absorbed various conflicting elements which have tended to hamper the development of its particular spirit. But at every turn we felt the soul of Flanders, and we who come from vaster countries, where we have been used to space and strength, cannot fail to respect, and I may even say to venerate, the spirit which has labored so diligently and has given so much beauty to the world. Those long lines of unemployed Belgian workmen waiting in the freezing dusk of autumn and winter for the soup doled out to them by charity—how unutterably dreary they were! I watched them often, and recognized the same quality of flesh, the coloring of skin, the shades of fair hair, the glistening eyes, which have been fixed in our minds forever by the power of a great art. . . . One more recol-

lection—it shall be the last. It is of a winter evening in a church at Antwerp. A group of women and children who had taken refuge from the cold outside were huddled close together, reciting the rosary before an image of the Virgin. A cluster of burning tapers made a zone of golden light around them among the icy shadows of the church, revealing at the same time a large altar-piece of the Nativity by Van Eyck. Little trembling flames threw their uncertain gleams over picture and worshippers, and I scarcely knew which Belgians were painted on the canvas and which were kneeling on the cold marble, cheating their gnawing hunger by reciting the rosary in Flemish with their patient voices. It was nothing, if you like—only the impression of a moment. But when one has felt such impressions every day, at a time when the question ‘to be or not to be’ is pressing on a whole nation, one comes to understand that such a people, from what they are themselves and from what their history has been, have a reason and a right to live. Their claim to justice shines from the eyes of the smallest and humblest—those soft, frank eyes of the Belgian children. Of course as a liberal and a neutral I knew this before-

hand, but when I came to live among those defenseless, silent, patient Belgians, my knowledge became less abstract."

"It is certainly true," said Daisy, "that there is one lesson which we Americans can only learn in Europe, and that is how much a country stands for which we call 'little,' but which has a long past behind it to which it has been true. You have learned that in Belgium, and I am learning it in France. In fact," she added with an amused smile, "I learned it in one day in my little Lorraine village."

Harder bowed with slightly ironical courtesy. "Women always learn so much faster than men." And then he added seriously: "You ladies are inquisitive. You want to know what are the impressions of a man who has spent two years and a half among the Germans, having been thrown more particularly with their officers, the famous German 'organizers,' and also among the Belgians. Let us put it that he has known what are at present the victors and the vanquished. His impressions must necessarily be complex, and at times even puzzling. It is true that we admired the German army as it flowed past us, apparently as inexhaustible as a mighty river, but

at the same time our hearts were filled with admiration of a different sort for the Belgians. In reading the other day an old volume of Montaigne which belonged to my father, I came across a sentence which reminded me of what the neutrals felt who were shut up in the invaded districts with the Germans. Montaigne said, playing with an intellectual truth in his liberal fashion: 'I could readily find myself at home among those who have a mind to light one taper to the Virgin and another to the Dragon.' The dragon, the brazen serpent, was splendid in his pride when he came down from the heights upon Waelhem, Contich, and Waerloos, raising clouds of dust and spreading abroad his infernal odors of sulphur and naphtha. Hell must smell like burning villages. Our hearts were wrung with pity for the Belgians, but they were as little hunted animals beside the great Beast, and the Beast was a magnificent monster."

"So that day," said Daisy, "the taper would have been lighted for the Dragon?"

"Well," answered Harder, "if I must confess the truth, I will admit that on that day the dragon would have had his taper."

"What was it made you feel most for the

Belgians?" went on Daisy relentlessly. "Was it that you admired their moral strength or that you pitied their weakness?"

"I can answer you," said Harder, "in the words of old Montaigne. The next taper would be for the Virgin with her sandalled foot upon the Dragon's head. And now it is my turn to ask a question: Which do you admire most in the little virgin, her strength or her weakness?"

"If the little virgin with her soft eyes and fair hair is Flanders," said Mrs. Felder, "we will fall on our knees to light her taper, which is more than Montaigne thought of doing."

"Very true," said Harder, "but Montaigne was not thinking of Belgium. What we may be sure of is that the resistance of a small and weak nation, whose very life is threatened, who is dragged to the pillory because she dares to say, 'I exist and I have a soul,' has a sacredness to which mere strength can never attain. Belgium confessed her belief in herself. She was like the bending reed—but a reed endowed with the power of thought."

"When I was among them I often thought of the blatant manner in which the Germans proclaim their 'biological superiority.' It is

a well-known theme, the *leit-motiv* of the war. They reason like naturalists, as if we human beings were governed by the laws of the animal world, in which one species preys upon another, from the highest to the lowest, in a sort of hierarchical progression. How many times, after our conversations with the officers who went with us on our rounds of inspection as delegates of the C. R. B. I asked myself the question which they have answered so boldly, and one day I said to one of them: 'But look here—after all, you know, we are not insects.'

"Is the history of nations really no more than what we call natural history? That is their war dogma; they have framed it upon the cruel laws of nature, and by a strange and inadmissible contradiction they constantly call upon God to carry out a plan from which the very idea of God is left out."

"That is because they give to their leaders," said Daisy, "the manual of the materialist, and to their people the *gebetbuch* of the pietist. I have seen these little *gebetbuchs* of the German soldiers; little black books, all alike, picked up in the trenches, stained with blood. They would be touching in their fervor of

obedient love toward the Kaiser and their princes if one did not know that the 'military caste,' as you say, had composed them as a sort of drug, a pious elixir to sweeten the soldiers' sacrifice."

"You have seen the *gebetbuchs*," said Harder, "and when we were rolling in motor-cars along the roads where the lines of dead villages stretched out like a street of tombs, I have often seen German officers take out of their pockets noxious pamphlets in which these theories of biological superiority were presented in various forms, sometimes the most unexpected, in order to justify destruction and . . ."

"And cruelty," said Mrs. Felder.

"They made us read these new gospels, and we discussed them; it was interesting to understand them and to be allowed to hear them explain their inmost convictions coolly, quietly, and almost intimately. A little German *hauptmann* who has that cerebral dynamite in his pocket will burn a city, and make a bonfire of the old books of Louvain as unconcernedly as he has seen his father smoke out a swarm of bees. The honey of the world has been made in order that Germany may enjoy

it. You know their formula—you have heard it a hundred times. Their might gives them the right, and the right of others is subject to perpetual revision by this might of theirs. But I do not want to weary you with these axioms, which are old stories here; they only surprised us Americans so much because our own national structure is so liberal.”

He went up to the large rosewood bookcase in front of which a row of little green baskets of various shapes, made of Indian grasses, gave out their strange scent, and, taking out a volume, said: “I saw this book, which I have read. Don’t be afraid, I will only read one line, the first, because I have often applied it to myself. Here it is. Heine says: ‘Formerly the most complete ignorance existed in France in regard to intellectual Germany—an ignorance which was disastrous in time of war.’” And he shut the book quickly, as if in fear of being caught delivering a lecture. “This book is now nearly eighty years old, and I don’t know that we have made much progress since. We did not know how Germany had come to put herself in the place of God, to deify and worship herself; her appetites are only a manifestation of her

strength. She is the Old God, to be sure, but still she *is* God, the living God, whether pervading the German army, or in the *gebet-buchs*, the biological pamphlets, the history, philosophy, and poetry of Germany, in the little blue flowers which bloom in every German heart—even down to German beer in German stomachs, and the imposing number of the herds of German hogs on their farms. It is part of the religious training of every German to worship Germany in his own person, and Germany worships herself in each of her creatures.”

“Then in that case,” said Daisy, “it is a sort of national pantheism?”

“Yes, more or less,” answered Harder.

Daisy went on: “But where did this doctrine originate? Did the philosophers make a nation of fanatics? Or did ambitious political leaders make use of the philosophers?”

“That is hard for me to answer,” said Harder. “It is an old secret of national chemistry, which has been working itself out slowly through the ages. We did not know Germany,” he repeated sadly. “She was protected against us by her nebulous philosophy, which we believed to be entirely speculative, as a beast of

prey is protected by the mystery of the jungle. Remember the many university centres throughout Germany; I am inclined to think that it was there, among those purely intellectual surroundings, that this doctrine was born. Even the most savage idea seems innocent while it is only an idea, a sort of violent exercise of the mind. And for all their self-worship there was much that the Germans failed to understand. They had their rich poetry, their incomparable music, their history, so old that its beginnings were lost in fable, their language, which eluded us even when we thought we understood it, in which we pursued a thought, a verb which hid itself away, or an idea which burrowed in the earth like a mole before we could grasp it. Ah," said Harder, stamping his foot, "we were not able to fathom them. They lived within themselves; what they did not understand they ignored, not only from lack of comprehension but from pride. They were self-sufficient, self-adoring. It was a sort of metaphysical perversion, and, as they are practical, they proceeded naturally from brutal metaphysics to brutal deeds."

"And that was the way," said Daisy, "in

which 'Weltanschauung' became 'Weltzerstörung.'"

She spoke in a pedantic tone, and Harder looked at her with surprise. "Some ideas can only be expressed in the language which created them," she said. "I have never tried to translate that word 'Weltanschauung,' so familiar to all Germans, and when one pronounces it one must look as though one understood philosophy." And speaking again in her natural voice she added: "All of which reminds me that I read the other day a letter which is very old now, from a traveller who was young when it was written. The date was 1841, and he was twenty. He had gone to make a poetic and philosophic pilgrimage to Heidelberg, standing among its lime-trees on the bank of the Neckar. He loved German poetry and German thought, and he wanted to drink them at their source, but in writing to his friend Quinet he spoke with bitter disillusionment of the 'murderous idealism which fills this country with phantoms.' He went to lectures given by peaceful professors in spectacles, and heard them say that 'life had withdrawn from France, and had entered into the Germanic body.'"

“Notice those words, ‘the Germanic body,’” said Harder. “For a long time they have expressed what was the greatest aim of the nation.”

“This traveller, who was a friend of my family, delivered his letters of introduction to certain hospitable families. He was invited to dine, and after evenings of intimacy during which (as with your professors at Berlin) the sincere convictions of his companions came out with the smoke of their pipes, he wrote again to his friend: ‘German society has become a mob of fanatics.’”

“Society!” said Harder. “You see the poisoned current, coming from far off, did not slacken. Society,” he repeated, “that is to say, the company in the drawing-rooms and sitting-rooms of the little German ladies, the women whom we praised as candid and naïve Charlottes and Gretchens, with neatly braided tresses and eyes like forget-me-nots; society—the poets, the musicians, the young officers who danced with the Charlottes to the languid and enchanting rhythm of the German waltzes; a mob of fanatics! I can understand it—and I too,” he went on, “have seen in old portfolios the correspondence of French fami-

lies; only a few days ago I was reading some letters of a Frenchman, also written from Heidelberg, but this time the date was 1870. His notes, intimately jotted down, are interesting. He came and went, he asked questions and talked, without any misgiving, and was disagreeably surprised one evening, when he had been invited to dine and hear his hostess sing some 'lieder,' to receive a stunning blow from his host. The war of 1870, which fell like a thunderbolt in France, was part of the every-day thought of the 'intellectuals.' It bubbled up in their talk like the froth in their beer-mugs. And, oddly enough, it was the 'intellectuals' in other parts of Europe who refused to believe that there could be a war until it had broken out. There was a contradiction of ideas; the German brain had been pursuing a dream for a century—and when Germany dreams, it is a nightmare for the rest of the world.

"It was a dream which was misleading, because with your thinkers, as with ours, intellectual speculations are disinterested. Your intellectuals rejected the idea of war, while the German intellectuals were hatching it. French thought is universal; in a certain sense it is

Catholic; German thought had become schismatic; it was only German. . . . I remember my father's love for Germany; he also would willingly have gone there on a pilgrimage. He knew nothing of Germany except her poetry, and when he was tired, at the end of a hard day, he would take up his Uhland and his Schiller. When he said 'Germany' it was with a pleased and restful smile. It seemed to me that he thought of her as an old goddess who was very close to nature, full of legend and of song. . . . But those who made the pilgrimage and brought flowers to the old goddess only found her high-priest, who explained her divine right to devour mortals."

"I can give you another saying of a Frenchman," said Daisy. "He was not altogether an intellectual, but rather a man of action, a diplomat who has still a hard task on his hands. I met him just ten years ago in a drawing-room; I can see him now, standing up to take his leave; I was astonished to hear him say in a grave tone, and as one speaks who has authority: 'You may believe me when I say that Germany is advancing upon France with the weight and regularity of a glacier.' I was much struck by the impression of

amazement, and, if I may say so, of fatality, which these words left upon their hearers, when spoken so gravely by a man whose whole business in life was to know what was happening in the world."

"If we look back from one landmark to another, across wide intervals, we may perceive that it is as if an illness had been coming on for a century, or even longer; it would be interesting for a political physician to follow its course more closely. He could distinguish forces made from a combination of pride and humiliation. If we look back now on these premonitory symptoms, it is because we have had but little time for psychological study during the last two years and a half spent in France and Belgium as guests of the Germans. Now that America has come into the war it will be our turn, and good for us to think things out and to look our enemies dispassionately in the face; I say dispassionately, because the more calmly we undertake this war, being aware in our inmost consciousness of the formidable thrust against which we are prepared to throw our weight, the stronger we shall be, and the more fruitful, therefore, our aid. If only we could also look in the same

way at Germany—if we could see into the depths of her mind!”

“Tell us something, Mr. Harder,” said Mrs. Felder quickly. “You said that you had been in ‘a tragic engagement.’ Did you see any atrocities?” She looked at him with her wide-open eyes; they were gray, flecked with gold, reminding one of the hush and mystery in the great eyes of nocturnal birds.

“I have seen—we have seen,” said Harder, “the atrocity of a system. But remember that saying of Macbeth’s: ‘I have supped full with horrors.’ Now that our country is going into war our sight must not be obscured by blood. I have been a neutral, a neutral who was obliged more than once, in order to do his duty, to be blind, deaf, and dumb. We were only hands, which had to be steady in order to distribute food intelligently in districts threatened day by day with starvation. If we had seen what we were not meant to see, said what we were not meant to say, heard what we were not meant to hear, our mission would have come to an end at once.”

“But hands speak sometimes,” said Mrs. Felder, looking at Harder with her mysterious eyes.

“Now Nettie Bell,” said Daisy, speaking of Mrs. Felder by her Christian name, “is going to make us guess one of her riddles.”

“Not at all,” said Mrs. Felder impetuously. “Mr. Harder,” she repeated in an even voice and with a quiet smile, “don’t you remember the hands—I think they were invisible—which traced certain words on a wall—and old Belshazzar trembled when he saw them. The words were written in letters of fire—I remember that when we had that lesson in our Bible class we had to underline those words, ‘in letters of fire.’” And she raised her hand, with its shining nails, and made the gesture as if writing in the air.

“We Americans, we are going to write those words!” she said. Taking from one of us a lighted cigarette, she repeated her gesture as if writing on the blue-silk wall of the room. “In letters of fire,” she said again passionately.

The quick light way in which she moved and her short black dress shadowed with airy tulle made her look almost like a spirit herself. “Well, Mr. Harder,” she said, “now that you have supped full with horrors you are going back to the United States.”

“No,” said Harder, “my travelling is over;

and he added in a lower tone, blushing a little, "I am going to join the colors. We are not free to speak; a whole people is still there, hostages for any imprudent words, but fortunately we may fight."

"You are going to join the army? Well, then, I am going to sing," she said in a whimsical tone, yet her voice sounded as though she were making an effort to refrain from tears. She opened the piano and her hands wandered over the keys in vague harmonies. Then she began to sing under her breath a strain which began uncertainly, as if stammered in a dream, and then suddenly developed into a song which filled the room with what seemed the monotonous and piercing cry of a child awakened from its sleep in a night of terror.

It was the "Christmas of the Belgian Children," by Debussy. She went through it without accompaniment, standing up. All at once, with one of those rapid and rhythmical movements which always suggested dancing, and as if she were made nervous by being looked at, she turned off the electric light and finished her singing in the dark. There was nothing to be seen of her save the shining of her eyes and the gleam of her little gold shoes.

Into the pitiful cry of alarm she put all the horror and pity which filled her soul, and could not be expressed in any calmer fashion. Then, as she turned on the light and stood once more under the familiar glow of the white lamp-shade, she said with a sad smile: "I don't know how to discourse, and I don't know how to work; that is all I know how to do for the war—to sing, like the 'cigale' in the fable."

At that moment the door opened and old Jean's perplexed countenance appeared again. Harder rose quickly to his feet, and bowed before Mrs. Felder to take his leave.

"Au revoir, soldier of the right," she said smilingly, but with a touch of emotion in her voice.

"Oh," said Daisy, with her somewhat austere fervor. "Soldier of the right—but also soldier of justice."

No one spoke. She went on insistently: "The triumph of right implies victory, but that of justice implies and calls for punishment." Then she added, her voice low and constrained: "Men have established right, but it is God who does justice."

"Bravo!" said Mrs. Felder. "Our Daisy is

becoming epigrammatic. Daisy, if you begin to enunciate formulas, you will marry a Frenchman!"

"Well," said Daisy, "that will be yet another way of making war!" And as she broke into her clear laughter, the little close white teeth fairly shone. "I am in love with France!"

How beautiful the night was, after the serene ending of the day! We walked up the Avenue of the Bois de Boulogne with Daisy, and with the same Harder whom I had met for the first time only an hour ago. The acacias shed the pungent perfume of their first blossoming, and high up among dense masses of foliage the horse-chestnut flowers stood out like white tapers in the twilight of a church. The wide avenue was almost empty, and slowly falling into the silence which gives to night its dignity. The heavy mass of the Arc de Triomphe reared its exact lines in the pearl-gray shadows, the arch itself full of a deeper black. We passed on; the ground sloped gently downward, and, like a quiet river between its banks, the avenue stretched out, dotted with its lights on either side.

"When one comes from where I have been,

and is going where I am to go," said Harder, "the beauty of Paris seems almost unimaginable."

"You are leaving us soon?" I said.

"Most probably," he answered. "For my part, I am not like public opinion in America—I do not need to be prepared. When one has spent two years and a half in Belgium and in your invaded provinces, one may not know how to make war, but at least one knows the reason for making it. For conscience's sake—and with us each man likes to reason with his own conscience, by himself—and that, after all, is the essential point. I wish," he added, as he led us with his brisk walk, "that all my compatriots at home, on the other side of the Atlantic, could have seen what we have. It would be like having permission to go into the beyond before taking one side or another in life. They would all have the faith that moves mountains—and they would stand in need of it.

"I think of my country—and although I find Paris beautiful—so beautiful!—I should very much like to be transported to-night to one of our great farms in the West. To the men out there, in those vast spaces where they have no longer to struggle against nature, any more

than against mankind, war will be a new idea! Here you have always been threatened; there are globules of defense in all French blood. But with us it is different. You have found us slow to awaken, slow to come, but you cannot know how faint and feeble the ripples of war have become by the time they reach our shores. The New World has prospered out there, between its two oceans, by following an ideal of labor and of peace.

"And the European wars—old quarrels reaching back into centuries of which we knew little or nothing—did not interfere in the least with either our toil or our tranquillity. I have relatives who until a few years ago knew almost nothing about Europe. The portion of the earth which has fallen to their share is quite sufficient to take up all their energy—and a lack of energy is not among their faults. They can walk for days on their own land without meeting an 'enemy,' or even a neighbor. I wish they were here already, but I also wish you could see them in their own homes, for then you would understand what a stupendous adventure it is for them to come here to fight on this little checker-board of the French departments."

"And they will come, they all will," said

Daisy. "A sentiment is born in them which owes its life, as you say, to conscience, and it will grow and become as powerful a motive as the indignation felt by other fighting nations."

"That is true," said Harder. "Germany has established a code of political ethics which is revolting to conscience as well as reason. There is a shade of madness in their dream. You have lived in Germany, Miss Folk. Do you remember the saying of the old man of Königsberg: 'Political *morale* begins where political morality stops'? It has often come into my mind while we were talking with the German officers. As we sat quietly drinking Moselle wines we often discussed the probability of America's going into the war. Well, the young men of my country mean to defend political morality against political *morale*."

"There is only one morality," said Daisy, "for there is only one God."

"That is what every one of our men will think as he goes into the fight. At first they were ignorant—then they hesitated, doubted . . . they were slow, I know, but the long sleep of peace makes the eyelids of a prosperous nation heavy. However, they are awake now, and coming."

"It is the return voyage of the *Mayflower*," said Daisy.

"Yes," said Harder, "and it is in the countries which we found so small that the new passengers will find the New World."

He stretched out his hand, saying "Good-by," shook our hands vigorously, lighted a cigarette, and in a moment his slender outline was hidden by the night.

CHAPTER II

THE AMERICANS IN THE FIRST DAYS OF THE WAR

“And, if they should be unwise or unjust, a flame would rise from our tombs, and the blood of our enemies flow in unavailing expiation.”—GOETHE, *Egmont*, Act II.

WE were a party of five one evening at the house of Louis Chevrillon.

There was Morton, a delegate of the C. R. B. for the north of France; like Harder, he had come through the German lines after the United States declared war, and to get from Lille to Paris (a journey of four hours ordinarily) had been obliged, like his compatriots, to make long stages through Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland.

(The Germans were anxious that the delegates should drink a little of the water of Lethe; they had seen the army lines—and had been in the country behind them.)

A charming American, Mrs. Vernon, was also newly arrived from the invaded districts. She had lived in Belgium, associated with all the work by means of which the Commission

had managed to keep order and sustain life in spite of the dire distress.

I met her then for the first time; she spoke of some of our fellow countrymen, actually near us and yet far removed, because they were on the other side of the front. She gave us the names of some of the stout-hearted Frenchmen who had remained on the invaded soil, and had been able, with the help of the C. R. B., to become organizers and providers in the haphazard life, made up of a little good and much ill fortune, which all led while under the German yoke.

Our hearts warmed to her as she spoke of our own people with such affection. Her expression betrayed strong emotion, although she smiled calmly; she was evidently a woman of energy, made up also of sympathy, zeal, and goodness; capable of taking a helpless multitude into her heart and working for them as a mother works for her children, putting intense feeling into the simple tasks of daily life.

When Mrs. Vernon said "I had the privilege" ("privilege" was her favorite word) "of helping the French in their horrible trial," she seemed to us to represent a Veronica saying,

with the accent of another land: "I had the privilege of wiping the bleeding face of the Saviour."

She was spending her last evening with us, on her way to the United States to show her countrywomen, with infinite pity and respect, the sacred veil.

It does not hurt to be pitied in such a manner!

The third American was named Rivards, and impressed me as being much like Morton; one is apt to think that foreigners are more or less alike, and these young men had at least one trait in common—they never spoke of themselves individually. They said "the C. R. B."—Commission for Relief in Belgium—as the members of a secret society might speak of it, and seemed to have lost all recollection of any life led before they joined the C. R. B. "Some of these days I must go and see if the United States is still there," said one of them. Was this taste for almost anonymous privacy a matter of education? Did it come from a happy gift of altruism? Or was it because what they had seen during the war had really made "new men" of them? They never said: "Such a thing happened to *me*."

They were imperturbably cheerful, willing to help, polite without being too effusive or too ceremonious. It was really hard to make out whether they had just come from living among the most tragic scenes of the war, or whether they had been making a profound study of chess or bridge. But it was clear that they had brought to the work which they had accepted all that was in them of strength, intelligence, exactness, and discipline.

The only time when they showed no trace of this slight tinge of puritanism (for such self-possession verges on the puritanical) was when they spoke of their chief, Mr. Hoover, the chairman of the C. R. B., and then they were anything but Puritans; they laughed, and let themselves go:

“Hurrah for Hoover!”

On the table the portrait of Hoover remained unmoved by this sudden outbreak of enthusiasm, in the midst of formidable piles of reports and magazines in which the work of the C. R. B. was recorded. It was the likeness of a man of few words; the brow low and unwrinkled, under strongly growing hair; the eyes deep-set in their sockets and very bright, as of a man quick to observe; the lips

thin and tightly closed, without even the shadow of a smile; the head slightly bent, as if, even while in the hands of the photographer, Hoover was thinking of some obstacle to be quickly and silently removed.

That was the impression produced on us by the chief of this new little neutral power, the C. R. B., as he looked out from his frame. The name of Hoover was continually on the lips of Mrs. Vernon and of our young imperturbables. These workers of the first hours interested us greatly, for their quiet exactness was a promise, as surely as a swallow promises spring, that the American intervention would be prompt and well thought out.

Hoover in his frame seemed to be thinking: "They will strike hard."

As I said before, there were five of us, two women and three men—three Americans and two French. We had just had a little war dinner in a dining-room which would be delightful on a yacht—very small, well ventilated, and with two windows set in angles. As we went up the stairs to the apartment, its owner rushed past us, fresh from the offices of the C. R. B. He flew up the five stories at a headlong rate, for he bore, swathed in the august

pages of the *Temps*, the chief dish for our dinner—two superb soles, which he had bought at the great Prunier's on his way home.

We had eaten the soles, preceded and followed by a lot of the odd little things which delight the mistresses of ordinary commonplace houses when they dine with brothers, cousins, or friends who are eccentric and impenitent bachelors.

Mrs. Vernon threw a slight shadow over our innocent mirth at this modest feast by taking in her hand a piece of bread. Bread was still good in Paris, and the crisp crust made a sort of golden case for the soft white crumb inside it; she turned it over and caressed it tenderly with her fingers, as if it had been some precious thing, saying:

“Rivards, what would we have given, a month ago, to have been able to take a piece of bread like this to the table of a French family?”

“Don't reproach me on account of my bread,” said Chevrillon.

“It is not in the least a reproach,” answered Mrs. Vernon. “I was only thinking that this is the promised land, and of the people whom we have left behind in the desert; the very

ordinary and every-day words for food have become almost sacred to me"—and she still held the bit of bread in her dainty fingers.

"One day in our district of Péronne," said Rivards, "I saw on the desk of one of our Americans five little flasks full of grains and powders; I recognized rice, and wondered if our friend were secretly keeping turtle-doves. He saw me looking at the bottles, and said: 'In each one of those I have put the daily allowance of wheat, rice, sugar, and coffee doled out to a Frenchman. It is my daily lesson, and when I find myself inclined to think that our diet in the invaded territory is somewhat frugal, the sight of those little bottles ekes out my meal. No,' he said, as if guessing my guilty thought, 'that is not food for birds, but the rations of French men and women.'"

"That is called the life-sustaining allowance," said Morton, "and millions of human beings work hard for it and thank God when it is given them. It is nine o'clock," he said, looking at his watch; "in a few hours, at dawn, or even earlier, the lines will begin to be formed and to grow outside our canteens in the invaded country."

At Chevrillon's signal we left the table, and

as the evening was mild we crowded out upon the balcony. From our fifth story we were on neighborly terms with the tops of the plane-trees as they swayed rustling in the light breeze, and we could watch the shining course of the Seine far below, for just here, at the Quai Debilly, the river makes a graceful and indolent curve between its stone-lined banks. The plane-trees and poplars planted on either side, alike in height and growth, leaned forward a little to follow it in its course, like a row of suitors when their lady-love passes by.

Seats were brought out for the ladies—two narrow deck chairs, over which were thrown roughly woven Mexican blankets, broadly striped in black and white.

There we were as if seated on primitive thrones. The night landscape was full of beauty. The quiet river shone through the trees, and as far as we could see towers and the spires of churches lifted themselves into the transparent air. In front of us the Eiffel Tower, a filagree of light and dark, was a fairy ladder waiting for sprites to climb moonward, while from its lantern, crowned with glowing stars, search-lights threw their rapid and furtive rays into space, like the glances of anxious

eyes. To the right, a great mass of undefined shadow, lay the Bois de Boulogne.

"Although I have often been in Paris," said Mrs. Vernon, "it seems different now in war-time. I have never seen the city so broadly mapped out under the stars; it looks like a very dark print."

"I am very fond of this war Paris," said Morton. He was playing with a little cat which he had snatched up on his knees; it was like a tiny ghost of a cat, gray as a shadow or a wreath of smoke. In winter, when it was lazily curled round, asleep on the hearth, close to the dying embers, it looked like a little heap of ashes. We called it Cendret.

"I am very fond of this war Paris," repeated Morton.

"Paris has around it and above it space and sky," said Mrs. Vernon, leaning over the balcony, "and it has also silence. One hears the water sliding past, and the trees breathing." And she stretched out her hand with a prettily earnest gesture, saying: "May war never touch, nor even menace any one of your beautiful stones." And she added: "I appreciate this symmetry all the more because I have seen so many lovely and venerable things perish. I have witnessed frightful and wide-

spread destruction, but I have never seen a stone fall from a cottage in your ravaged land without being conscious of the feeling of order and of attachment which had placed and kept it there. I was in a church one day, at Saint Omer. Shells had pierced it through and through; bits of sky showed through the rents in the vaulted roof; crows had built their nests in the capitals of the pillars, and flew screaming and cawing in the place which formerly had only heard the murmur of prayers. Grass grew between the flagstones. As I looked a large stone became detached from the roof and fell into the choir . . . and then another . . . and yet another. They fell, one by one, and the sound of their falling was repeated sonorously from the arch overhead. How I thought that day of the hands that had set those stones in place ! I love France so dearly that I even love the hard-working hands of the men long dead, who mixed the mortar and held the trowel . . . and to come where all this beauty is intact makes more poignant the contrast with the desolation we have left behind."

A brisk current of air made us turn our heads; the door opened, and in came our friends Daisy and Nettie Bell.

We left the balcony, as it would not have

held us all, and as Daisy was shaking hands with her compatriots she said:

"I am sure you must have been speaking of the C. R. B."

"Not at all," said Morton. "We were saying that Paris in the moonlight, swathed in her dark war-veils, seems to us a new city."

"Everything is new," said Daisy. "We ourselves," and she looked at her companion, "we are also new."

"As for me," said Mrs. Felder, "I feel as if I had only really been born on the day when my country went into the war. I am youth itself!" And as she stood smiling before the mirror she twisted around her fingers the little curls, shining with silver threads, which had strayed from under her toque.

"We have known the French," she went on, "as people do who have often met, but only at masquerades, with masks and in dominoes. And, face to face, we have gone through the complicated steps of the dance which calls itself international life."

"That is precisely the reason," said Daisy, "that neither of us has been able to see the national life of the other. We demanded of Paris that she should make a display of pre-tentious frivolities for us."



Distribution of rations to the civil population in a town of devastated France.

"The France of foreigners," said Mrs. Felder, "was not at all that of the French."

"In fact," said Daisy, "we have often been amused by the ignorance of Parisians about the only side of Paris known to us. We liked to see a light which was only phosphorescence. After thousands of years, we are still interested in the phosphorescence of Athens and of Rome."

"The most attractive thing in a really strong being is his weakness," said Nettie Bell.

"We did not see the fire," said Daisy; "we were only looking at its reflection."

"It was not the torrent," went on Nettie Bell quickly; "it was the froth on the stream, which dissolved between our fingers."

"It was not the forest," Daisy answered at once (they were both evidently amused by the duet), "but the creepers which flowered and nodded around the old trunks. All the winds of the earth seemed to come together here, sowing good and bad seed broadcast. Do you remember, Nettie Bell, the big orchids in our Southern woods? They swayed to and fro, dazzlingly beautiful, under the branches of our oaks, but they had no roots."

"Yes," said Nettie Bell, "I remember them; I have often gathered them in a wood which I

knew well. I loved the long evenings when we used to cut their greedy clusters."

"They perished when the cold winds blew," said Daisy, "and were strewn on the ground, exquisite in death."

"And then," said Nettie Bell, "the great trees, stripped of their smothering ornaments, showed their strength as they held their own against the blast which had raised the long waves of the ocean."

"Is this an apologue?" asked Morton gravely.

"Of course it is," said the pair, glancing meaningly at each other.

"Our friends are very poetical this evening," said Mrs. Vernon.

"It is not we who are poetical," said Daisy, "all France is a great tragic poem. Have you noticed that every one says: 'It is impossible for me to do any reading'? Imagination has never conceived anything so portentous as what we are living through."

"I have not been in Paris since 1914," said Mrs. Vernon, "and then only for a day. It was in September. I had come from Brittany, and was trying to get to London. It was on a Sunday, and the German menace hung over Paris

like a malevolent cloud. The government and the administration had moved to Bordeaux. I looked with anxious curiosity at the Parisians, as one looks at children who have been left alone. They were all evidently under a great strain. I remember one woman's saying to me that afternoon: 'I don't know whether I can hear cannon very far away, or whether it is only my heart beating.' I was all alone, trying to get through a long Sunday of waiting. I took a cab, and wandered rather aimlessly along the quays; I wanted to see Paris with her beauty still unharmed; it seemed an unimaginable calamity that within twenty-four hours it might be destroyed. Almost without knowing it I found myself at the Ile de la Cité, and there I heard what sounded like a powerful yet calm and rhythmical murmur. I left the cab, and went as far as Notre Dame. An immense crowd was gathered in the great square before the cathedral. The three deeply recessed doors of the church were wide open, and at the end of these long avenues of shadow I could see the interior, all aflame with candles. The worshippers who thronged the nave and aisles were singing; their voices came out to us deadened and distant, as if from another

world, almost drowned by the rolling of the mighty organ. In the great square the immense crowd, with one voice, chanted the responses. The children who had been left alone sang—and prayed.

“It was a peculiar experience for a stranger to be thus thrown, almost by accident, into the intimate life of a whole city on a day of sore distress. I had never seen the cathedral church of Paris literally overflowing with life and echoing to prayers. It was for that, and not to be a precious and half-deserted monument, that the mighty church had been reared. On her island, with the river flowing around her, she was like a great mystical vessel laden with pilgrims, coming down with the current toward the plain. It seemed as if the great metal statues on the roof were for the first time set free from their hierarchical alignment; as if the saints were going freely to and fro, like anxious mariners watching the heavens and the sea. Some of them seemed to go down narrow stairs, almost like rope ladders, outside the turrets, swiftly and calmly, speaking one to the other. As I was looking at them with amazement I saw another strange sight in the open space around the old vessel girdled

with the waters; more statues were moving in an undulating manner, as if they were being borne on invisible shoulders above the crowd. They were the patrons and saviors of France; I heard the people near me call them by name—Saint Denis; Saint Geneviève, tall and erect in her silver robes; Saint Louis; Jeanne d'Arc, carrying her banner. They had been brought out of old reliquaries; they prayed with the people and the people prayed with them."

"Our friend is even more poetical than we were," said Daisy.

"It is only that I have never forgotten that vision," said Mrs. Vernon. "Perhaps the love inspired in me by France dates from that day. Those myriads of people, pouring from every quarter, were communing with their past; they sought a means of escape from the dreaded morrow by going deep down in their history, back toward their forefathers, on the same little island where Saint Geneviève had watched over the ramparts threatened by the same foe; it was a vision of the fifth century. So much for your Babylonian Paris!" And she added, with emotion: "To belong to an old nation is a noble inheritance. We shall all have, like young crusaders, the recollection

of some particular date, that of the day on which we first understood what this war really meant. Do you remember, Daisy, at the time of the presidential election in the United States, six months ago, the big posters in every street of every town, in all the States? One saw the thin, cold face of Mr. Wilson, with his light, observant eyes behind their glasses, and underneath were the words: 'He kept us out of war.'"

"Yes," said Daisy, "I remember those posters; they corresponded to the feeling of that day. We had not then begun to understand the inner meaning of the war. Our young and sensible country was perhaps rational in holding back from the convulsion called war; we thought ourselves safe from the periodic eruptions of the old European volcano."

"Besides, war was not a volcanic eruption for the United States," observed Morton. "We came into it without a shock, with no surprise, through internal processes due to conscience and intelligence. The same likeness of the same President Wilson might be still shown on every wall of every city in all the States, with the same eyes, as cool and observant as ever, and we should take off our hats

while we wrote under the portrait: 'He declared war.' He spared us a period of opposition, discussion, and disagreement, and the whole nation, turning completely round from the idea of peace to that of war, went forward at the pace set by him. After such lucid and methodical reasoning the necessity for war was as clear as the demonstration of a mathematical problem."

"Yes," said Daisy, "and the rational young continent will make war strongly and logically; I see my country, her decision once made, resolved to go on to the end, and putting forth all her strength to back her will. We seem very unlike, springing as we do from such different stocks; our flowering may be widely different, but all our roots are struck deep in American soil; we all stretch upward toward the sun with the same energy—toward what we *will* to do. We shall see that the war will be a sort of 'fiat lux' for the nation. We were saying the other day that we had not known Germany, nor did she know us. We were amazed by England, and we may confess now that we did not really know how much mysterious and magnetic force there was in France. You will acknowledge some

day that you had only crude and fragmentary ideas about us."

"What will surprise the French more than anything else," said Mrs. Vernon, "is the simplicity, amounting almost to candor, of our men. What have they known of us, for the most part? The so-called American women represented in their novels or plays, and the little gilded crowd that was to be found in Paris between the quarter of the Etoile and that of the Opera, or in the various 'Palaces.' However" (and her sensitive face showed her relief), "we shall now see each other as we really are—we shall know what your religion so rightly calls 'the inner life.' The inner life of a people is ordinarily hidden, and only reveals itself in times of trial. I have felt it so strongly in France! We at home are still making speeches, taking diplomatic notes, expanding in the verbal enthusiasm of people generously stirred by a great cause. It will be different when our troops get here; when you know what my contemporaries have never known; when American blood begins to be shed. It is then that you will know us for what we really are, and until that time comes, do not speak of us at all. I thought I loved

France," she went on, "but I did not know her until I saw her suffer and bleed during my long stay in the invaded country. I had the happiness—yes, the happiness—of passing many months shut up with the French, and facing the Germans. All that I had read about France previously, and all that I had myself seen, counted for nothing. We shall always consider that it was our privilege—I hold to that word 'privilege'—to enter thus into the life of a people during their trial, to be in intimate relations with them, and to see their wound.

"That wound was the scarcity of food—hunger. One may manage to accept the usual idea of war, that of men fighting among themselves, but when we knew, while I was still in America, that the Belgian and French population in the invaded districts was threatened with famine, we were all shaken by emotion. Morton, you were in London—you heard the first cry for help."

"Yes," said Morton, "it came from Brussels. My compatriot, Millard Shaler, who was sent by Belgian committees, brought the first message, and our ambassador in London, Mr. Page, received it. It was an historic moment

for us," he said, looking at his companions, "for it was then that the C. R. B. was organized—on the 25th of September, 1914. The invasion of Belgium had somewhat slackened—the breach had been made, and the German armies were pouring into France. In Belgium the Germans were beginning to install themselves—you know how! They were forming an administration, appointing a governor-general and governors of the different provinces. But this administration chiefly concerned itself with feeding the German armies, that is to say, with gathering in the foodstuffs and requisitioning the cattle. As well as we could count, 215,000 Belgians took refuge in France during August and September, 1914; 80,000 went into Holland after the capture of Antwerp, and there were about 100,000 in England. If you saw these multitudes leaving or arriving, you felt that you were witnessing the exodus of a whole nation. Large numbers are always impressive. But, as a matter of fact, the reality was different. Only a minority had fled—they who had happened to be in the blood-stained path of the armies. There still remained seven millions of souls—or rather of mouths—to be fed in a country

whose agricultural and industrial riches had been destroyed or confiscated, and which was constantly overrun by German armies going or coming, by the German wounded, by tired troops who were resting before being sent to the Russian front. And all of them ate and ate.

"I think it was the great burgomaster Max, now revered the world over, who was authorized by the Central Committee to enter into negotiations with the Germans in order that some thousands of tons of food supplies might be admitted into Belgium.

"This Central Committee was made up of rich and influential men, accustomed to handle large business transactions, without regard to their political opinions. They were, therefore, not 'officials'; they did not represent the government with which Germany was at war; they represented only the hungry millions, and sought to feed them.

"M. Solvay gave his great name to this national committee; M. Janssen also joined it, and M. Francqui became its managing director. It is only bare justice to name the Belgians before speaking of ourselves. Their country had no more money and no more wheat. Only one thing was left—its men.

"The committee addressed itself in the second instance to the diplomatic representatives of the neutral powers who had remained in Brussels: the American minister, Brand Whitlock, and the Marquis of Villalobar, who represented the King of Spain.

"It was thus that the first few links of a double chain were forged. It was necessary, on the one hand, to fill the empty granaries of Belgium from the reserve stocks of Europe and America, and, on the other, to reach the German authorities, such as the governors of provinces, or even the general government, as without their consent the vessels loaded with wheat from the United States would hasten in vain to the docks of Rotterdam. The manna would not fall from heaven of itself; it could only come through a door in the wall of fire and iron enclosing Belgium, and unless that door were opened by German hands, famine would take possession of the beleaguered land."

"Villalobar," said Daisy. "Was he the same who had been Spanish minister at Lisbon?"

"Why, yes," answered Mrs. Vernon, "and if you had known him you would think as I do, that there could not be two Villalobars."

"To be sure!" said Daisy. "He is a remarkable man. And when one has met him it is impossible to think of Spain and the Spaniards without calling to memory his strikingly Spanish face. Love of old Spain was deep-rooted in his heart. He loved her, and yet he also had visions of a new young Spain, casting off the fetters of tradition and custom to move freely in the modern world. If I were to see him again, how I should like to remind him of the days which we spent together in the Portuguese back country, when we both used to dip into the great pots in which the foundation of rice was mixed with a varied assortment of Spanish peppers, crabs, shell-fish, and skinny little pullets. It was then, in those hostelries which might have sheltered Don Quixote, that Villalobar used to speak of his sovereign and of his dreams for Spain, until his every 's' seemed full of energy."

"That is indeed he," said Morton. "He has not changed, and he earnestly and nobly insisted that his sovereign should play a great part in this matter of feeding a whole country. Do you follow the thread?" he went on. "First came the appeal from the famished people, and the Belgian Control Committee

was formed. Even before the war there was a well-organized system of charitable relief throughout Belgium. In a small country, living and thriving by its industry, the classes are not widely separated; the rich man is nearer to his poor neighbor, the employer to his workmen, the landowner to those who till his soil. Besides that, the two great political parties, Catholic and Liberal, were equally concerned with the problems of relief. It must also be remembered that the country was not centralized in its capital. We found, as Harder was saying the other day, that the Belgian people are full of civic as well as of national love and pride. That is a natural result of their past history; each city—Liège, Antwerp, Malines, Ghent—had already its own charities, worked for and helped by its citizens. It was as though the working drawings had been made for a great building which should shelter the refugees from the country, and the indigent and unemployed in the towns. The old spirit of local pride, whether in cities or in villages, sprang up more strongly than ever, and you must bear in mind that each town was isolated from other towns, that each village stood by itself. It should never be forgotten that

this system of separate cells was enforced throughout the whole of the occupied districts, and the suffering which it entailed will never be fully known. Nobody had heard of it when Millard Shaler came to London with his German safe-conduct, to hoist there his signal of distress. Popular feeling was deeply stirred. Could it be possible that a whole nation was faced with famine! You know that very many English people were most hospitable to the Belgian refugees, not only giving them food and shelter in various buildings, but also inviting them to private houses; I know of a number of English homes in which the guest-chamber was occupied by a Belgian couple who in every way shared the life of their hosts. Acquaintance and friendship had already sprung up, and when the news spread that Belgium was suffering from hunger, the English were still more drawn toward their refugees; when they looked at the little foreign children among their own in the nursery of an evening they could well imagine the suffering which was hanging over Belgium. But the American ambassador, a neutral, was the only man who could act in the matter, and on the 1st of October Mr. Page received Mr. Hugh

Gibson, secretary of our legation at Brussels, who had come in order to confirm Mr. Shaler's message officially. Mr. Page at once set to work to solve the difficult problem in the only sensible, indeed the only possible, manner—by finding a man—not a potentate, nor a philanthropist, nor a sociologist, nor a generous millionaire—but just a man."

"A man capable of inspiring enthusiasm," I said.

"Not altogether enthusiasm," said Mrs. Vernon, "or at least not enthusiasm only; a man who should be able to make other men respond to his energy and to his devotion to duty."

"That man," continued Morton, "was Hoover. The Hoover of to-day you all know, but at that time he had scarcely been heard of, except in the business world. All of us in the United States have to look for our ancestors somewhere in Europe. Hoover is a name of Flemish origin, and the man himself was well known in London as a mining engineer. His family had at one time been Quakers, and from them he derives his look of reserve, his tightly closed lips, and his taciturnity. His work as an engineer had led him to Australia

and China, as well as all over America; half of his life had been spent in rapid travel; he went from London to Hanoi as a business man in London goes from his house to his office in the city, and he had looked at the world wherever he went with his gray, sagacious eyes—the observant eyes of an engineer. He was a man who saw and was not afraid to act.

“He had very vivid recollections of the Germans, whom he had seen in China at the time of the Boxer troubles. Some German troops were quartered in a Chinese village, and one evening the men became, as the report put it afterward, ‘slightly drunk,’ broke into the little native houses, and violated the women whom they found. Now you know that when a Chinese woman loses her honor it is her duty to die, and the morning after the German soldiers had amused themselves in their fashion, Hoover saw the bodies of hundreds of Chinese women drifting down a narrow stream; they had all thrown themselves into it together.

“Hoover told us how the gayly colored gowns and the black sashes with their big bows full of water came slowly floating be-

tween the reeds; a close procession of drowned women, looking as if a flock of bright-hued birds had alighted and were being borne along by the current.

"He said sometimes that when he remembered that sight it was easy for him to imagine what the German occupation, even of a civilized country, would mean; the words German forces, requisitions, scarcity, famine, had terrible significance for him.

"Page sent for Hoover and told him that the Belgian committees (and six months later it was the same story from the French committees in the invaded districts) were in great distress, having neither supplies nor money. If a neutral committee could be formed to import and control food, the Belgian and French organizations would see that it was properly distributed.

"Hoover knew our planet. He knew whereabouts on the earth gold, copper, tin, or diamonds might be found; he had even rediscovered, in a crevice of Mount Sinai, the old mine from which the Egyptians took the greenish turquoises that we believed to have been discolored by time in the tombs. He would be able to find in other mines wheat, bacon,

beans, shoes, woollens, and cottons, as well as the ships to carry these stores to Holland, and, above all, money to start the work. He could be at the same time in London, New York, San Francisco, Brussels, and Berlin; his genius for ubiquity was unrivalled.

“Hoover listened to his ambassador silently; then he went to his engineering office, shut up shop, and I don’t know whether he has ever been back at his office. The different mining companies saw no more of their consulting engineer.

“Hoover’s first committee was made up of men of his own profession. He had confidence in them as a body; they had been all over the world, and knew it well; they also knew the reverse of the medal as well as its face; they were familiar with material difficulties verging on the impossible; they had often foreseen and witnessed accidents and catastrophes—they had also often averted them.

“The Belgians and French were in the position of a large gang of miners overwhelmed by a landslide. It had happened, on a smaller scale, to men before. Their calls for help could be heard; the would-be helpers knew that the prisoners were still alive, that they were calm

and strong in their patient waiting. It was a question of getting them out without making a false move which would bury them more deeply, and of managing to feed them until they could again see the light of day. A problem of this sort naturally interested the engineers.

"The committee met in London on October 22, 1914, and the most pressing questions with which it had to deal were set forth in the following order:

"To find money for the purchase of food supplies.

"To come to an agreement first with the British Government, in order that the blockade of the German ports and of the invaded territory should be suspended at a place to be determined upon.

"To obtain from the German Government subsequently a guarantee that the food brought into Belgium should be used for the benefit of the civilian population only, the same guarantee to apply later to France.

"Finally, to make distribution certain and effective, an agreement to be reached allowing the American delegates to live behind the German lines in Belgium and northern France,

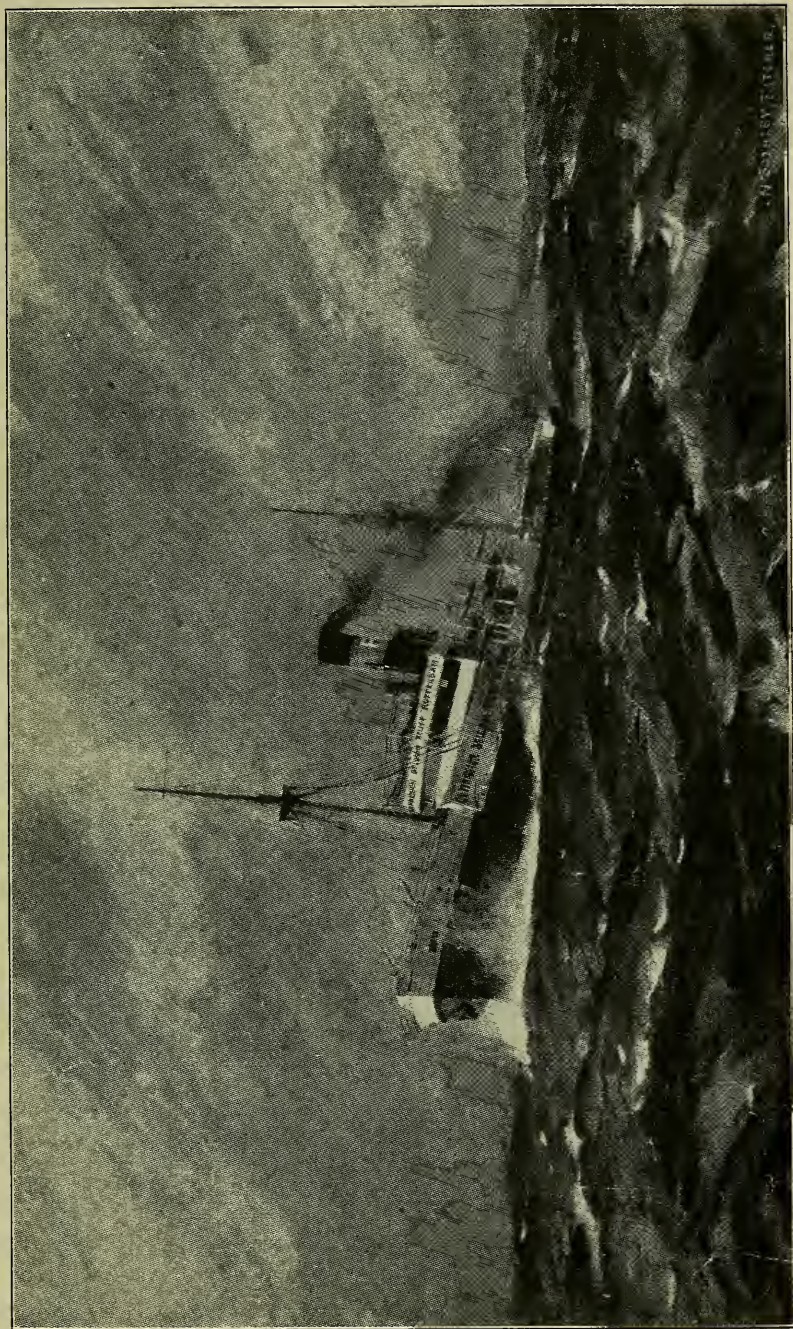
and to have sole and entire control of all supplies imported. The foodstuffs were to be received by the delegates at Rotterdam (for all this class of freight came, and still comes, to that port), allotted by them to their agents in different regions, and sent off under seal, to the various centres of distribution. There they were to be counted, reallocated, and followed step by step in their dispersal until at last they should reach the village depots where they were to be sold or given away; the Belgian or French women would dole them out to the very poor, to hospitals, to schools, and even to the houses of the inhabitants, where the meagre rations would keep famine away from the family table.

“This comprehensive plan was carried out with great rapidity; the first meeting of the committee was held, as I have said, in London on the 22d of October. Not many days later an old deep-sea captain of an American steamer bound for Liverpool with a cargo of wheat was quietly smoking his pipe on her deck when he received a message by wireless telegraphy: ‘Take your cargo to Rotterdam.’ His astonishment was great, but the message came from the company which employed him,

so he changed his course forthwith, and on the 5th of November the first vessel laden with wheat for the C. R. B. came into the Dutch port, where one of our members, Captain Lucey, was impatiently awaiting it. He took over the cargo at once, and sent it on to Brussels, where our minister, Mr. Whitlock, and our delegates began its distribution."

"But I want to follow the plan more closely," I said. "Where did the money come from? Who paid for the wheat?"

"The money!" said Mrs. Vernon. "The money came from everywhere; after the first days of November it poured into the coffers of the C. R. B.; Hoover and his Central Committee made a general appeal through the press, and throughout the world committees and auxiliaries were formed to raise the funds needed. These committees sprang up in England, America, Australia, even in Japan and China. To open the mail of the C. R. B. at its offices in London, which I have done many a time, was to witness the working of a magic spell; checks from all the quarters of the globe were piled up in heaps. Belgium will know some day, if she does not already, what burning sympathy and compassion her plight



From a painting by N. Sotheby Pitcher.

Steamship *South Point* in the North Sea, February 27, 1915.

The steamer of the C. R. B. having brought food supplies to Europe is sunk on her return voyage.



aroused in every land. We Americans especially felt that it was an immense satisfaction to our consciences to be able to give at least money to these outraged countries. Each family wished to be something more than inquisitive neutrals, making their own flesh creep by reading horrible stories in the newspapers. In London one daily paper pledged itself to raise a hundred thousand pounds a month by popular subscription. That was a wonderful time for us women ! We left knotty questions, such as the British blockade and the German guarantees, to be settled by the men; our business was only to provide money. We had to organize committees without end: large committees in the great cities, smaller ones in small towns, and even committees in the agricultural districts, to reach the big farms.

“Daisy, you must remember, for you were there, the market for flowers and vegetables which was organized by our San Francisco committee. We set up our booths on the great square, facing the bay; and those of us who were members of the committee wore the costumes of one or other of the Belgian or French provinces. We all had tucked away in our portfolios pictures of your old national costumes

which perhaps had been brought over by your emigrating ancestors; we were familiar with the head-dresses, the ribbons, the short, full skirts; to us they were full of charm, perhaps because we have no such thing as a peasant among us. With us a farmer is a gentleman who sells wheat, a business man like any other, and the word 'peasant' and the Old World costumes have therefore an almost poetic attraction which would be hard for you to understand.

"We sold our wares all day in the big square—our California guava, our muskmelons, our cherries, our yellow eschscholtzia—and our roses. All our bankers and merchants, our millionaires and billionaires, came themselves as early as seven o'clock in the morning to make their purchases at our booths, and we had to laugh as they went back to their motor-cars, carrying huge cauliflowers, great baskets of pears or apples, or armfuls of chrysanthemums and roses. As for me, I sold for a big price—oh, a tremendous price, to a banker who was not supposed to be in the least sentimental—a little linen bag embroidered with a lily-of-the-valley; in the bag was a handful of earth which a refugee woman

from the north of France had brought with her as Orientals carry talismans.

“All day long we sold to men who were supposed to be hard and practical all sorts of impossibly foolish little trifles, such as you would sell here to children. A button from a French general’s uniform made a great hit. Our men out there are at the same time realists and sentimentalists. They will not take time to read a pathetic story, but their hearts are moved by what they can see with their own eyes. They belong to the family of Saint Thomas, and the more you know of them the more you will be conscious of this quality; you must give them something visible and tangible.

“I have told you about San Francisco, but it was the same story everywhere. For instance, at Denver, in the Rocky Mountains, a committee had been formed in order to get up a club. Hoover was then making a campaign in America; he stopped at Denver, assembled the committee, spoke to them of Belgium for a quarter of an hour—and when he left, all the money which had been collected for the club was in his pocket. It was a matter of a change of heart, of a couple of words and

a couple of signatures, and that Rocky Mountain city had to do without its club. I don't want to seem to boast of our having given money—I didn't mean that—I only meant to show Hoover's quick and compelling magnetism. It was not the mere money—that would not have been worth mentioning—but the giving of it, so instantly, so spontaneously, meant that the picture of Belgian distress had aroused pity and wonder in every heart. In the most remote little towns of the United States, where the war seemed infinitely far away, there was the same thrill of wonder and compassion for Belgium and France—and people gave and gave. That encouraged us, for we also, as Daisy can tell you, made a campaign of our own. In French we should be obliged to say that we made addresses or gave lectures—but in English, luckily, we can say more simply that we spoke. We went about from town to town in our own California; sometimes the meeting was held in a theatre, but often out-of-doors, if the weather was fine. We simply said, 'This is what we have seen,' and a few weeks later the checks came pouring into London. When we first began we were somewhat doubtful as to the result. The war was

so far off—and then it seemed as if an atmosphere of inviolable peace surrounded our Californian country, our splendid gardens, our parks, our orchards covered with domes of blossoms under which one may drive in spring. When their working day is over our men seem to absorb peace as they sit in the large, fine houses which they love to build, and look out over lawns where the great cedars stand up like temples of silence. Some among us have pride of peace, as in Germany there is pride of war; peace means freedom won by moral striving toward justice and mutual tolerance. We had among us many who called themselves ‘haters of war.’ Some went so far as to refuse to hear anything about ‘the raving madness of Europe.’”

“Yes,” said Daisy, “but they listened to us, and when we told them of the suffering in Belgium and invaded France they loosened their purse-strings. They asked nothing better than to give money, and by so doing they drew nearer to the great questions of the war. Moved by pity, they asked themselves the reason of this frightful injustice, and already their hearts had begun to take sides.

“You are such a logical and reasonable race

that you have no idea of the strength of sentiment in our country. Our men are peculiar; they are sharp at a bargain, and sometimes hard to get on with; business with them is a game in which their energy is strained to the utmost. The more money they make the more enjoyment they have, the more they feel their power and their superiority over their rivals. But once away from their offices they are extraordinarily human, almost sensitive—I should like to say tender, but in your oversensible and somewhat mocking country that would sound ridiculous.

“It cost them nothing, absolutely nothing, to give; if they were cautious as to anything more it was because they did not want to take part in the European dance of death. The ocean which washes their shores is well named the Pacific, and they were pacific as well.”

“That is not the same thing as being pacifists,” said Daisy.

“Not at all,” said Mrs. Vernon, “and the pacific ‘haters of war’ will very likely send you some day troops who will fight obstinately until they conquer. Their conversion is being prepared by stories of the nameless sufferings

inflicted on a people who were only defending the soil of their country.

"Sometimes money was given us and at other times wheat or flour.

"Once at Philadelphia we saw a steamer sail with an entire cargo of flour, the gift of the flour-dealers of Minneapolis. A crowd had gathered on the dock. The steamer looked as if it had been powdered all over; flour was dusting about everywhere; the captain, white as a miller, was laughing, and the sailors laughed too; every one was in high spirits, and when the anchor was weighed and the flag hoisted there was great cheering. Nova Scotia also sent cargoes of provisions, at her own expense. Such vessels were called 'gift ships,' and on their subscription lists were names of many people who had but little to give, and also of many children. And then later I saw another steamer go off; it was about Christmas time, 1915, and it was called 'the Christmas ship'—I told you we were very sentimental! Her cargo was made up of toys and playthings for the Belgian children, little clothes for them, and ornaments of tinsel, glass, and gilt or silver paper for their Christmas-trees. We actually had a president

of a maritime company, its stockholders, the captain of a ship and its crew, who were willing to risk their boat and the lives of all on board in order that the little Belgians might be able to keep their traditional holiday.

“Notwithstanding all stipulations, the Minneapolis gift ship was sunk by a submarine on her return voyage. But that was only one out of many; the other ships went their way, and arrived at Rotterdam. They were rather like the rich man in the gospel who had to pass through the eye of a needle; they did not exactly enter into the kingdom of heaven, but they did enter by the narrow way of Rotterdam into the kingdom of the poor. Hoover was pleased. To be sure, America was not alone in generosity, and he has often told us that the American contribution was even small compared to that of Australia. It seemed as if the farther countries were removed from the war, and the more they felt, or fancied themselves, secure, the more they were moved to pity.

“We had to travel a great deal in the course of our work,” said Mrs. Vernon, looking at her friend Daisy. “How often we saw, far off, the smoke from the vessels of the commission, and watched them come into the harbor at

Rotterdam. The C. R. B. had its offices on the docks; its little steam-launches went to and fro in the estuary of the Meuse; they had the commission's own particular flag—indeed, they have it still, but one is always tempted to speak in the past tense of something in which one no longer has a part.

“Yes, how many times we have watched with the director, Captain Lucey, the mooring of one of these ships. While he gave his orders I looked at the Meuse; its gray, fast-flowing stream had passed by Verdun, Dinant, Namur, and Liège; and as I thought of the peaceful harbors of the Pacific Ocean from which the ship had come, I remembered words I had heard in a hospital from a little French soldier: ‘The evening that we passed through Dinant the Meuse was red because so many bodies stabbed with bayonets were bleeding in it.’ The Meuse was red no longer; it was a dull gray, under a low-hanging sky. Weeks had passed since the bleeding corpses had rolled and drifted out to the eternal oblivion of the ocean; the river had forgotten them.

“While the unloading was going on the masters of the Dutch lighters sat waiting on benches smoking their long pipes, their feet in

white wooden shoes. Captain Lucey had to come to terms with them, for it was on their great flat boats that supplies could get into Belgium and France, by way of the canals. Little by little the C. R. B. had to lease three hundred of these barges, as it had been obliged, after the first gift ships, to form its own fleet. It thus became a little neutral power whose merchant marine was protected by international agreements. In the harbor of Rotterdam there was always a crowd to see the boats of the commission come in, largely made up of boys and girls full of curiosity about the war, for whom these supplies which were to go into the forbidden country behind the barbed-wire barriers had a somewhat fearful attraction. The Dutch fishermen, also curious, stood silently on their fishing-smacks, stopping their work and looking gravely on, as if the big vessel, bedecked with streamers, was part of a funeral. Invaded Belgium and France were so near that it was as though a dead body lay in an adjoining room.

“On the day of our arrival at Rotterdam a ship had just been unloaded in two days and a half, and we saw the lighters being filled.

The Dutch masters and our delegates counted and verified the sacks together, then the barges were covered with big tarpaulins, with the well-known initials of the commission painted on them in huge letters. The tarpaulins were then sealed, the seals to remain intact until the load should arrive at its destination, and then only to be broken in the presence of one or several of the thirty young Americans who were divided between the centres of distribution in Belgium and France.

“And so, the next day, we saw thirty lighters going peacefully up the Meuse, one after another. The Germans allowed food to enter, but they kept the railways for the transfer of troops and munitions; they were the arteries of their formidable war circulation. They allowed us, however, to make use of the canals, and we liked to think of their beneficent network—Dutch, Flemish, and French; the tracery of tranquil waterways, bordered by elms, poplars, and aspens, reflecting from one generation to another the placid life of ancient countries. Later, when we were living in the dreary invaded districts, it gave us almost an illusion of peace to see the barges come floating down.” And here Mrs. Vernon stopped

and looked half-timidly at Morton, as women sometimes do when they have betrayed emotion in speaking of a subject which men are in the habit of treating with composure, as a matter of business.

"You don't say anything, Morton," she went on. "Do you think I am too sentimental about our C. R. B.?"

"Not in the least," said Morton. "Quite the contrary. After all, is not the whole of this war a question of sentiment? And is it possible for us, who know what we are talking about, to call attention too often to the danger which still threatens the invaded countries? There are no longer any Americans to take charge of and distribute supplies; Dutch and Spanish delegates have taken our places since America went into the war. That change in itself is not very important; but a change is possible which would make an incalculable difference. If there were any lack of money to buy the food, if the vessels of the C. R. B. could no longer go to Rotterdam, if the canals should freeze over in winter, and if then, for instance, the Germans refused to allow the railways to be used, the immediate result would be not hunger alone but famine. Death

would hover over the whole of Belgium, and even more especially over the invaded parts of France. The life of the inhabitants of those regions hangs by a thread. It is certainly allowable to speak of sentiment," he continued with warmth, "when one has seen that possibility as we have. Those who have to live in the invaded country are still perforce mute; you will only know later all that they have had to undergo. In order to help them to keep the little spark of life which is in them still, we have been forced to be very calm and cold, forced to inject clearness and method into our dealings with problems which called primarily for sentiment. Hoover said to us over and over again: 'There is only one way in which you American delegates can do your duty, and that is by ignoring the war. You are only stewards of grain, of bacon, and of dried peas. It is your business to see that they arrive safely, to count and weigh them accurately, and to make sure that they reach the mouths for which they were intended.' And what looked so big when, as Mrs. Vernon says, fleets of ships left American ports and strings of barges went up the canals, looked very little when the seals were taken from the tar-

paulins, the sacks opened, and the manna had to be distributed among nine millions of hungry mouths. And we had to be very stingy stewards; if we had brought into the invaded district more than what was called 'the ration necessary to sustain life,' our work would have been looked at askance, and we should have given offense."

"But to whom?" said Daisy.

"To every one. It happened to us what inevitably happens to those who are called upon to play a part in a great conflict, without being on one side or the other. The Germans, with whom we had necessarily frequent relations, reproached us bitterly for sending munitions to the Allies; when they saw our depots full of stores, our soup-kitchens and canteens, our supplies for the sick poor in the hospitals, they spoke of the hunger in Germany because of the British blockade. They said: 'You are no longer neutrals; you are keeping alive hostages whose sufferings might otherwise affect the hearts and the fighting power of our enemies; by keeping the conquered alive you are hindering us from making the war hard and therefore short. It is you who are prolonging it.'

“And when we went to England or France to beg for money and for vessels—for after a time it became necessary to ask the governments to take a hand in the vast business—well, we found that the Allies also looked at us coldly. Here in France they said to us: ‘By all the laws of war it is the Germans who should be called upon to feed the inhabitants of the districts which they have invaded. The enemy has installed himself in part of our country, and governs it. Everything which we send into those districts is like a present given outright to the Germans, for if we feed nine millions of Belgians and French, there is just so much more food left for nine millions of Germans. You are interfering with the blockade, and taking ships which might be used to bring us munitions—you are only delightful philanthropists.’ And they said what the Germans had done, only with infinitely more grace and polish, holding out their hands in sincere friendship: ‘You are delightful philanthropists, but you are prolonging the war.’

“Prolonging the war! The same bitter and disturbing criticism came from both sides; both parties had come to the same conclusion. Doubt sometimes entered our own minds—

was it really true that we were making the war last longer? If we had not intervened, would the Germans have fed the people under their yoke? Was it true that our barges on your canals were bringing relief to the Germans and not to the French civilians? We heard many heated discussions upon the subject, many theories as to the war which seemed almost convincing. . . . But when we had come away, and were facing realities, instead of merely talking about them, our own conclusion was always the same. The Germans would *not* have fed either the Belgian or the French population. If there had been no blockade they might perhaps have observed the 'laws of war,' but as it was, they said: 'What! we ourselves are short of food as we have never been before; famine is one of the weapons used against us, and our enemies have more faith in it than in the strength of their arms—and shall we deprive ourselves of what was grown on German soil, and is our own, in order to feed our enemies? Is that the way to make war—or, at any rate, this war of ours? Are civilians not to be allowed to die, although German soldiers must?'

"We repeated this German reasoning in

London, and sometimes in Paris; in the offices of cabinet ministers and also in drawing-rooms. You have many very charming young women here, and their hearts are not hard, but their love of country made them feel that we were in the wrong, and they usually said: 'In the end it is the Germans who are the gainers by your work.'

"Well!" said Morton energetically, "I know it—we all know it"—and he looked at his companions. "The Germans would *not* have fed the civilians of France and Belgium from their slender store—or, rather, to be more accurate, I will agree that they would have fed those who were willing to work for them, for their war—they would have been put in the same class as the German civilians; but as for supporting the men and women who resolutely refused to work—never! Here you do not know the whole situation; there are many things that could not be real to you unless you had actually seen them. For instance, you cannot picture the brutal irritation of a German officer when he is met by the passive resistance of a refusal to work. We have seen—or, rather, we have heard of (for we were not allowed to see them)—men who had so re-

fused being brought to the Kommandatur, and from there ordered off to be kept in ditches half full of water until their spirit was broken and they were willing to go to work. Ask the men and women who have been repatriated ! You will hear direct testimony then. Women who refused to do manual labor for the German officials were obliged to stand upright in empty and unheated rooms until they also were willing to give in. Through uncurtained windows they could look into an adjoining room; sewing-machines stood ready there, a chair in front of each. It is needless to multiply instances. Your ears will be filled with them as soon as your repatriated people come back, and you will believe them more readily than you would me, for you will see in their faces how much they have suffered. The settled conviction of all of us who have lived with the Germans, and who do not look upon them as altogether the Beast of the Apocalypse, but just as Germans with two legs like ourselves—our conviction is that the daily bread which we brought, and which is still being given every day in Belgium and in France, is in a manner the last bread of a final last freedom. Can you believe that a

man is really free to give or to refuse his work to his masters when he lacks even the humble daily loaf, when he has to see the faces of his wife and children pinched with hunger? There is one sort of hunger that one does not often see because it is soon put an end to by death. All that is a tragic fact which crowds out of our minds the various theories as to the customs and even the 'laws' of war. The Belgian and Frenchman, if kept alive by us, was free to work or not as he chose. Even if he had to stand in the ditch half full of water, he knew that his wife and the children would have some bread and rice, and a little bacon. Here at home when you have given war allowances, when you have been slow in enforcing restrictions (I mean no reproach), when you have not wanted to disturb but keep the families of soldiers contented, was it not because you wished that your soldier might be free?—free of soul, to fight without a backward look. You have given allowances to the wives and mothers of your fighting men; why is that? Because the man under arms is sacred to you, and that is only justice to him. His wife and family may stay in lodgings for which they are not forced to pay; you give them fuel and food."

“Do you remember,” said Mrs. Vernon, “that in the gospel Our Lord rebuked the young man who looked behind him? When I was in Belgium and France I often thought of how Christ had put into the Lord’s Prayer the words ‘Give us this day our daily bread.’ He himself fed his disciples, now by the miracle of the wine at the Marriage of Cana, now by the bread when the crowd hearing him was anhungered, and again by the miraculous draft of fishes which Peter and John took from the Sea of Galilee. It is the part of the master to feed his people—and he who would win the heart must also care for the body’s needs. There is a spiritual bond between the giver of bread and the man to whom it is given—we did not say that to those who disagreed with us; they might have called us ‘delightful evangelists,’ after having called us ‘delightful philanthropists.’ But these are points of view which we may acknowledge as we sit here by the fireside, friends together, resting after a long task, and wishing, as we look back on what is past, to see clearly and comprehensively.” And then she added, with a shade of timidity: “Please excuse my evangelical digression.”

“It was very welcome,” said Morton. “We cannot have too many points of view. But to go back to what I was saying—the Germans, once their army was fed, would not have taken bread out of the mouths of German women and children to hand it over to French children whose fathers refused to work. They would have carried out a final ‘atrociousness’ with the complacency of Pharisees, justifying it in their own eyes, as they had done in other cases, by saying: ‘It was the fault of the people themselves—we offered them plenty of food if they would work, but they refused.’ This refusal to work was the outward manifestation of a resistance which forced their masters to be continually aware that their power had a limit. Even if, in particular cases, the will of an obstinate ‘rebel’ broke under the sufferings to which he was subjected, the general resistance continued.

“We have seen the women who would not sew sacks to hold earth for the protection of the German trenches; poor ‘rebels,’ with haggard looks and colorless lips; their only rebellion was to fold the thin hands which had once worked so diligently and were now weak from hunger. It gave them new courage to

know that they and their children would not be obliged to eat German bread.

"And, after all," Morton went on, apparently somewhat afraid lest he might have been too much carried away by what he was saying, "those differences of opinion seem almost as remote as the old scholastic disputes; it matters little now how the supplies came; we had many anxious moments, but the C. R. B. managed somehow to find the necessary millions, the ships, and the supplies. In the darkest hours, when we had begun to whisper 'famine' to one another—as you know we did, Chevrillon—the tension broke, and the wheat arrived."

"Then your C. R. B. is the phoenix of the war," said Daisy.

"You may well say so," said Morton. "She sprang up from her ashes not once but a dozen times, and, as Hoover has told you, we were able to see that the flour, or rather the bread, reached the mouths for which it was intended. Then the Germans blamed us again, turning their grievance another way round by saying: 'Since you feed these people who will not work for us, you are taking their part against us.'" Morton rose and stretched his

arms with a gesture of infinite relief: "Thank God we are neutrals no longer!—neutrality is a poor job for any man."

He sat down again and took from his pocket a small printed sheet, which he unfolded carefully and laid upon the table.

"You have all seen facsimiles of the posters, meant to terrorize the French and Belgians, which the Germans stuck up on the walls of the Town Halls wherever they went; the words 'Death,' 'Shooting,' were always conspicuous, and we became quite used to their threats. But perhaps you may not have seen this little notice; it is very small, modestly white, and altogether mild-looking; it speaks with the insidious voice of Mephistopheles, breathing temptation in a whisper. It is addressed to the workers in the Belgian mines, and invites them to go to Germany, to work in factories there. Each workman is promised twenty francs before he starts, all his expenses are to be paid, and on his arrival he will receive the same wages as German workmen of the same class. Furthermore, sums varying from eighty to a hundred and twenty francs a month, according to the number of his children, are promised to his family during his absence.

His household is to be protected and looked after by the Kommandatur, the first payment to be made three days after the head of the family has left."

We passed the crumpled bit of paper from one to the other. It looked as deadly as the big green and red posters which used to glare at the Belgians and French like bale-fires from the doorways of the Kommandaturs.

On the table, scattered among blue reports bristling with figures, were various proclamations, valuable as testimony, which had been smuggled out of France and Belgium by travellers whose names, for obvious reasons, were withheld. The first, dated from Brussels in October, 1915, announced that death-sentences had been pronounced by a court martial on three men and three women, for "organized treason" on their part, and after the list of the condemned came the words: "In the cases of Bancq* and Edith Cavell, sentence already has been carried out."

"It is an unheard-of use of the word 'treason,'" said Daisy. "One only 'betrays' one's country or a friend. Are you sure the word 'treason' was correctly translated?"

* Wrongly spelt in proclamation; his name was Baucq.

"You forget," said Morton, "that these proclamations were printed in French."

"So they were," said Daisy. "Sometimes I ask myself whether I am awake or dreaming, whether I have not lived another life before this one, and if these Germans can really be of the same race as those whom I have seen at the theatre in Berlin, aroused to enthusiasm over the old-time independence of Flanders. I remember the applause when Egmont, awakened at dawn in his prison-cell at Brussels, sat upright, listened quietly to the sentence condemning him to death 'for treason,' and then said to Silva: 'Go tell thy father that he neither deceives me nor the world'—'das er weder mich noch die Welt belugt.' And we learned Egmont's last words at school. When he was about to die he said: 'I give my life for the cause of liberty. Enemies surround you on every side, but be of good cheer, my friends, for your fathers and mothers, your wives and children, are behind you. A cruel edict of their masters may oppress their bodies, but it cannot crush their souls. For the sake of all you hold most dear, follow my example and die with a high heart.'"

She quoted these words in a low voice, as

if sending her memory back to her school-days in order to recollect what Goethe had put into the mouth of another prisoner at Brussels, and added: "Goethe and Schiller, the true heroes of German thought, bore witness long ago in Germany, and for the German people, to the greatness of the men and women who are waked in their prisons to-day to hear that they are to die 'for treason.' "

PROCLAMATION

The Tribunal of the Imperial German War Council, sitting at Brussels, has pronounced the following sentences:

Condemned to death, for organized treason:

Edith CAVELL, teacher at Brussels.

Philippe BANCQ, architect at Brussels.

Jeanne de BELLEVILLE, of Montignies.

Louise THULIEZ,* professor at Lille.

Louis SEVERIN, pharmacist at Brussels.

Albert LIBIEZ, lawyer at Mons.

Condemned to fifteen years' hard labor for the same reason:

Hermann CAPIAU, engineer at Wasmes.

Ada BODART, at Brussels.

Georges DERVEAU, pharmacist at Pâturages.

Mary de CROY, at Bellignies.

During the same session the War Council pronounced

* Her name was Thuliez.

sentences of imprisonment and of hard labor, varying in length from two to eight years, on seventeen other prisoners accused of treason against the Imperial Armies.

In the cases of BANCQ and Edith CAVELL, sentence has been already carried out.

The Governor-General of Brussels calls the attention of the public to these facts, in order that they may serve as a warning.

GENERAL VON BISSING,
Governor of the City.

Brussels, October 12, 1915.

PROCLAMATION

OF THE GERMAN MILITARY COMMANDER OF LILLE

The attitude of England makes feeding the population increasingly difficult.

In order to lessen suffering, the German authorities recently asked for volunteers to work in the fields. This offer did not meet with the success which was expected.

It is therefore ordered that the inhabitants shall be evacuated and moved into the country. They will be sent into the occupied territory in France, far behind the front, where they will be engaged in agriculture, and not in work for the armies.

By this means they will have an opportunity to provide for themselves.

In case of necessity they may be fed from the German depots.

Each person evacuated may take with him 30 kilo-

grams weight of baggage (kitchen utensils, clothing, etc.), which he will do well to prepare at once.

I therefore order that, until further notice, no one shall change his domicile. Furthermore, no one shall leave his legal domicile between 9 o'clock at night and 6 o'clock in the morning (German time), unless he is provided with a proper permit so to do.

As this measure is irrevocable it will be for the interest of the population to remain quiet and submissive.

THE COMMANDER.

Lille, April, 1916.

“Goethe and Schiller,” said Morton, “belonged still to the small Germany of separate states. It was by their thought, and not by force of arms, that they wished to influence the world. But do not let us consider the poets; there is no question of poetry now, nor of an heroic past. Everything is ‘the present’ and ‘reality.’ Here is something else,” he said, taking from among the scattered papers a large green poster, quite new, as if it had only come from the printer that morning. “Here is a ‘notice’ of which you have heard a great deal; a ‘notice’ does not seem very important. This one was posted up at Lille; look at the date,” and he pointed to it: “‘April, 1916.’ It was on Easter Sunday that this paper was placarded on the doors. In the suburbs of

Roubaix the German soldiers were sticking it up hurriedly on almost every door."

We read:

NOTICE

All inmates of this house, excepting old men and women, and children under fourteen with their mothers, must get ready to be deported within an hour and a half.

An officer will have the final decision as to those who are to be taken to the assembly camps. In order that he may do so, all the inmates of the house shall stand together outside it; in case of bad weather they will be allowed to stand in the entry, the house-door to be kept open. No protests will be considered. No inmate of the house, including those who are not to be deported, may leave it before eight o'clock in the morning (German time).

Each person shall have the right to 30 kilograms weight of baggage; in case of overweight, that person's baggage will be rejected without further consideration. The baggage of each person must be in a separate parcel, with a legible address firmly affixed thereto; such address to consist of the owner's name in full and the number of his identification card.

It is absolutely necessary that each person shall provide himself with utensils for eating and drinking, as well as a woollen blanket, stout shoes, and underclothing. Each person must wear his identification card. Any one attempting to avoid deportation will be rigorously punished.

ETAPPEN-KOMMANDATUR.

Lille, April, 1916.

Morton put the two notices side by side, so that we could see them at the same time, the one promising good wages and the fostering care of the authorities for the household of the absent worker, the other ordering wholesale deportations.

"You see both their methods," he said. "They were followed at the same time, and by the hardship of one you may judge of the temptation offered by the other."

"But they must be demons," said Mrs. Felder, and she pronounced the word as if it came from the depths of her soul. It was the first time she had spoken during the evening; her soft eyes, which were sometimes those of a seeress, had been fixed on Morton.

"This, then," she went on, "is what you have seen in France, in the country which we have considered as our brother, in the country of liberty! Did you actually see these deportations?"

"Certainly," said Mrs. Vernon. "For my own part, I had seen one day, a long time ago, at Marrakech, in an out-of-the-way corner of the bazaars, a trader bringing in his new riches—a troop of slaves, men, women, and young girls. I thought then I had never

in my life seen anything more inhuman; but now it seems to me only like a sort of biblical vision of primitive Oriental life, since we have seen, in a great industrial city of France, German officers, with waxed mustaches and polished boots, dragging Frenchwomen toward the railway-stations—Frenchwomen who had been torn from their families and homes on that Easter night.

“In the country we sometimes met a little procession of these deported ones. The poor souls were very quiet, very simple—it was from them we learned to speak calmly when our hearts were on fire. Their heavy feet shuffled in the dust; their backs were bent under the weight of their burdens; their thoughts were only of their misery. Some of the women were crying. We stopped our motor-cars, and they looked at us anxiously as they went by, as if hoping that we might be able to help them. They could not know, as they saw us watching them with calm curiosity from our carriages, that we, the witnesses of their woe, would raise a cry of horror and condemnation which would for the first time intimidate their oppressors and check this revival of slavery.

“For it was an American named Poland,

one of the heads of our C. R. B., who was the first to shame the German military leaders out of these deportations. When he first protested against them to one of the generals high in authority at the General Headquarters, this chief pretended that he did not believe such tales. 'They were due to the heated imagination of neutrals; all philanthropists were alarmists; we saw persecution everywhere.' The general ordered an investigation, and Poland saw the officers who had taken part in the deportations and signed the 'notices' deny them pointblank, or else have conveniently hazy recollections. When Poland finally pushed them to the wall, and they had to confess what they had done, the general was, or made believe to be, very angry, and not long after that the order was revoked both in the occupied zone and in that where the army was in movement. Freedom within their own households, that last treasure of the oppressed, was given to your fellow countrymen; the mother might keep her daughter, the daughter stay with her mother. But when the sons reached the age at which all mothers, at all times, have been proud of their boys, then for them came deportation."

"We have been so absorbed in watching

the sudden turns of fortune in the fighting," said Daisy, "that we have thought less about what we could not see, what was going on behind a wall; we have not known enough about the suffering back of the lines."

"The wall is forbidding," said Morton, "forbidding and well guarded, and once within the walled territory there are yet other enclosures. In going from Belgium to Holland, as one crosses a strip of empty land, fenced on either side with a latticework of barbed wire and electrified cables one feels already a prisoner. For those of us who were newcomers, having only landed at Rotterdam that same morning, the impression was very striking. German sentinels, carrying their rifles, and with pistols in their belts, paced to and fro in the strip of flat, damp country, guarding the wires charged with instant death to any touch. It is a hunting-ground which is uncommonly well preserved; the sentinel, who comes with his hand at the salute to examine our passports, will open the barriers for us if he finds them in order, but one has left freedom behind."

"And yet," said Mrs. Vernon, "that is only occupied territory."

"Yes," said Morton. "It is a bit of Belgium

which is still divided into provinces. Fifty thousand Germans are enough to 'hold' the country; they 'occupy' it, they keep watch, they arrest patriots and condemn them to death. To them the young Belgians who try to pass the barriers in order to fight are game-birds of war, to be slain with the deadly electric current. We have known of boys caught like sparrows in a net—that happens every day. All this is terrible enough, and yet it is only 'occupation.' If one goes from Belgium into France, as we did each week, the impression was different again. Near the frontier there was another zone to be passed, more sentinels pacing the fields. There we came into the 'zone of action,' in which two millions and a half of German soldiers prepared for and made war in a territory inhabited by two millions and a half of French people. The numbers were even. In Belgium a gap had been made in the beginning, and the track of the invasion was marked by ruins, but it was on the land of France, divided into as many compartments as there were German armies holding them, that the torrent overflowed. *Etappen-Gebiet*—the word sounds like the crack of a pistol. The air of liberty is so

rarefied that one can scarcely breathe; just think of it—of all the German armies intrenched or fighting, with their van and rear guards, crowded into this broken-off corner of France. There is not a village, no matter how small and how far behind the German lines, which has not its German cantonment—its German soldiers billeted on Frenchmen—or on Frenchwomen. They are everywhere. For each Frenchman there is a German under arms—the count is easily made—and this at a time and in a war in which every method of pressure has been carefully studied and pitilessly applied. Belgium could sometimes mock her ‘occupiers’ with the brave laugh of the weakling who turns the giant into ridicule—but in the ‘zone of action’ in France no one ever laughed. Let us put it in another way—there were two suspicious German eyes spying on every French man, woman, or child. Those eyes saw everything—in that, as in everything else, the German thought himself godlike—and punishment might follow a laugh, a smile, or even a shrug of the shoulders.

“We ourselves were not free in the zone of action. We found friends among the Belgians, and the close community of our work allowed

us to know them well. They used to ask us to dine with them sometimes at the week-ends, and when our work was done we sometimes played tennis on their lawns with their daughters. Even during the most tragic experience every hour is not sad.

“But in the French zone of action we could have no friends. Various sign-boards showed us that we were in the empire of destruction as soon as we came into it. For instance, a very polite German officer got into our railway-carriage and took possession of us. It had been agreed that we were to superintend in all centres of distribution, but we were superintendents who were superintended—we were suspects. Each of us had a German officer as a constant companion. We called him our ‘nurse’; we also called him our ‘man Friday,’ for we felt like Robinson Crusoe on his desert island. We could never speak to a Frenchman freely or alone; the big ears of the German officer were always wide open. In the course of our rounds we passed the night in the same hotel with him, and sometimes in the same room; we took our meals at the same table; at the meetings of the French committees the German officer never left our side. We were as

inseparable as a man and his shadow. We were young, and we were not there to grumble. As long as the Germans kept their word and did not lay hands on any of the imported wheat, it was our business to keep silent. It was also part of our instructions from Hoover: 'You have nothing to do there except to see that the wheat arrives, that it is made into bread, and the bread eaten by those for whom it was meant. If it is hard to say nothing, remember that silence is the price of food for those people.'

"I remember arriving once in the little village of ——. When I had last seen it, a month before, it was intact beside its river, but when our motor-car stopped that morning in the square in front of the church, I saw that three houses had just been burned down; their calcined walls had fallen in. Some women who were beating their linen at the public washing-place turned their heads away when they caught sight of the German uniform. With my 'Friday' we made our visits to the president of the French committee, at the communal storehouse. We counted the sacks of flour which had been received the night before, and we looked into houses here and there to see if

our distributions had been regularly made. Everything took place as if the village did not bear the marks of recent violence. I tried to surprise some expression on the faces of the French committee, but they were gloomy and strained; they only spoke of trifling matters relating to the food supply. As for me, I had no right to put any questions; I was restricted to a vocabulary which would go into two pages of a Berlitz manual:

“‘Have you received the supplies?’

“‘How many sacks were there?’

“‘Have you returned the sacks?’

“‘Have you destroyed the tin boxes?’

“There were some moments of silence which seemed suffocating. Through the window I could see the breaches in what had been, but a month before, a charming square of houses around the church. That particular day ‘my officer’ did not leave me for an instant, and when we met some women, as we went out, I saw his blue eyes looking hard at them. His glance was like the glint of a bayonet. The women passed silently, and I felt that they were like wounded animals who are unable to tell why they suffer.

“When we were back again in the motor,

between the two soldiers with their loaded rifles who occupied its corners, my officer lit a cigar. He had become affable and altogether human again. The fresh air, the swift motion of the car, the ending of a task, all combined to put him in a good humor, and he said to me: 'If you are not on duty to-morrow we might have some shooting, if you like. Thanks to our excellent organization, the game has not been molested; there are plenty of partridges in these fields.'

"'Perhaps,' I said; 'but tell me, W., what happened at ——?'

"'Oh, only a punitive measure,' he answered, and his face again assumed the hard expression that it had worn during our visit, as he puffed hard at his cigar. I never found out why those three houses were set on fire, but later I became familiar with such 'accidents.' Now it was a house, or a little group of houses, which were missing in a village; again it was a few men, or women, or priests. . . . In the small town of N. we found the room empty in which the president of the local committee, who was also the mayor, usually received us. Our meeting took place in a neighboring room, without any allusion

to the absence of the president, but there, at any rate, we found out through a notice posted on the wall of the town hall that he had been condemned to death 'for treason.' The time is not yet come when we may speak more openly, but let us remember that in that part of the world men and women are only hostages. Sometimes as an act of clemency the penalty of death is commuted to hard labor.

"I heard afterward that Monsieur X. was already serving his sentence in Germany, among common criminals, with his head shaven and wearing the convict's jacket and cap, marked with his prison number. He was plaiting baskets for German shells, and at night he was locked into a cage made of iron bars. But we only knew that later; the only answer at the time was 'a punitive measure.' Another time it was a curé who had disappeared; for those who are invaded have their 'missing' as well as the troops; he also had been condemned to death by a court martial 'for treason,' the sentence being commuted into penal servitude in Germany. In his spiritual capacity he had helped his parishioners to solve a difficult case of conscience—ought one to take one's copper to the Kommandatur

or not? The old curé said from the pulpit at high mass: 'Resistance is impossible; when they come to your house, let them take what they can find—but,' said the old man gently, 'do not let them find more than you can help.' His flock understood him, and during the night all their saucepans and ancient warming-pans were buried or thrown into the Meuse. The old priest was caught in the act of wheeling his own coppers through the woods on a barrow, in the path to the river. I knew that through my 'Friday,' who was so indignant about the 'traitor' that he spoke out for once. Riveted as we were to each other, sometimes by night as well as by day, we used to talk; we only escaped from this Siamese life on Thursdays, when we went to make our report at our committee meetings in Brussels, which left us six days of the week in which to hear and discuss German theories about the German race. The 'Fridays' might be changed but the theories never; our officers loved to intoxicate themselves with their own beliefs, as a fanatic repeats his formula to himself over and over. By finding the same ideas incessantly reiterated in their newspapers, their pamphlets, their books, and their conversa-

tions, one comes to know that the German brain is an anvil for German thought.

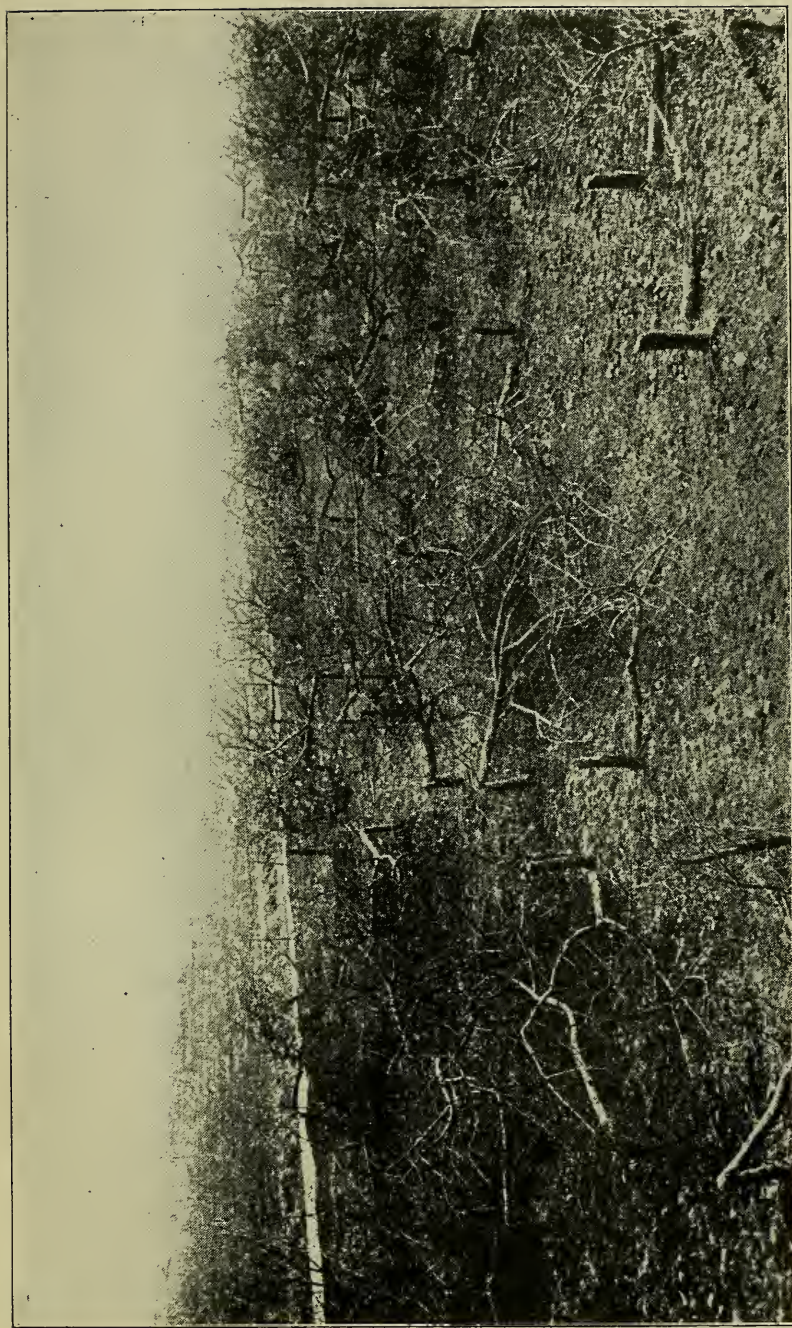
“You say in your newspapers that they are barbarians, but you are mistaken, as our friend Harder told you the other day; this war has taught us that they are Germans. The difference is great. The barbarian was a big child in a world of shadows, but these men see very clearly what they destroy and why they destroy it. First it is the riches of a country, then the source of that riches, men, land, and machinery. We have seen them calmly seated, resting themselves and reasoning about the war, their future *zukunft*, their harshness and their punitive measures, while they drank the wines of France temperately and with appreciation. I have watched them as they followed up their forecasts, striking the table with their fists until the glasses danced upon the trays. They would say to us in English: ‘And if it is not this time, it will be next time, and if not next time, then the time after.’ You may as well be prepared, for they have plenty of patience. If man is a vague and changeable being, then the German is not a man.

“During our table-talk we Robinson Cru-

soes became fairly satiated with their ideas of the selection and superiority of the Teutonic race. Nothing could be feebler than these bold paradoxes strained through ordinary German minds, always followed by abuse of the Americans: 'We were furnishing France with munitions'; 'we were no longer neutral'; 'we were prolonging the war.' There were some lively arguments at our dinner-tables. We have seen the entry of the United States into the war; we have also discussed it beforehand. They would never believe in it; until the very last day they thought it was only our American bluff. 'It would be a crime,' they said; 'it would make the war last indefinitely.' They were gamblers who thought they had won the game; they were quite ready to make peace, and to embrace Belgium and afterward France, both of whom they loved, after their fashion. They loved France especially, but evilly and covetously, as a brutal man loves a charming woman who flies from him when he comes near her. It was a mixture of love and anger. I have often seen them, when it was time to rest at the end of one of our day-long journeys in summer, taking their bitters in front of one of your cafés. They

seemed to breathe the air of France with sensual delight, while they said: 'Poor France! when will the war come to an end?' During our stay with them we often saw long lines of carts pass by, drawn by slow and heavy-footed Russian prisoners, and surrounded by German soldiers. It was a familiar sight on your eastern roads. The carts were laden with tree-trunks, smooth and shiny, made green or golden by the mosses still clinging to them.

"Your French forests went to Germany in gangs, under guard, like prisoners, and the German officers would repeat: 'Poor France!' They spoke sincerely, as an executioner who knows that nothing will make his hand tremble might speak of a woman whose beautiful hair he has just seen cut off, and who is to be delivered to him for torture. Poor France! Sometimes, while these loads of recently felled trees were going by, the air was full of the smell of their fresh sap, and one could see the old French wood-cutters going hurriedly into their houses and shutting their doors. . . . Then, as if to dispel any unpleasant feeling, our officers would call the children who were always dawdling on the door-steps, tell them funny stories in French, give them bright new



Trees cut down by the Germans at a crossroads at Champien, Oise.

pfennigs, pull their ears gently, or pat their thick hair. And then, as if to say, 'How easy it would be!' they would point to the German soldiers off duty and resting, who were grinning sheepishly at the young women as they passed, or even—we may speak out, may we not?—dandling paternally in their arms big solemn-looking babies . . . the sad children of invasion."

Morton stopped suddenly, as if he were afraid he had wounded the intimate national feelings of the French people who were listening to him. The subject dropped. Mrs. Felder's eyes were full of tears; Daisy, usually so ready to talk, kept silence; Chevrillon got up to light the alcohol lamp in time for tea.

There was an awkward pause for a moment, broken by Mrs. Vernon, who said:

"My dear friends, we should not feel that we had the right to touch your wounds if we had not by coming into the war pledged ourselves to heal them. We have been made part (I am using one of the expressions of your church, but when one speaks of France all thoughts become religious)—we have been made part of your suffering, but now we have come to unite ourselves with France militant.

Is it not true, Daisy, that this is the day for which we have longed? and—I will speak again in terms of religion—in order to receive the reward of our Redeemer we must have shared his Passion. Very many of our boys will go into this war as true Christians, feeling that a work of redemption must be accomplished, and the whole world delivered from evil. You have spoken often of our material civilization—you will be surprised at the amount of idealism to be found among the strong and well-grown young men who are coming to fight for you. It is strange,” she went on, as if talking to herself, and trying to make a vague idea clear, “it is just the reverse of the German conditions, where transcendental idealism has led to materialism of the most ferocious kind. But then,” she went on, as if pushing away a puzzling problem, “we also are contradictory. We came out here as haters of war, as physicians who had been made immune to some terrible plague, and were bringing remedies to its victims. And now the war has entered into our very blood—yes, even I, a woman, have felt it,” and she raised the hem of her sleeve from her slender wrist with an instinctive

movement, as if to show us the mark of an inoculation. "It came to me in invaded France; it came to others as they sat here by their firesides; it will come to still others in America. The haters of war now say to-day: 'If war can only be destroyed by war, then let us throw ourselves into the fight at once.'"

It was growing late, but we found it hard to part. Mrs. Vernon was sailing for home the next day, to continue her untiring campaign for invaded France and Belgium, and teach her friends the new gospel of adversity.

Daisy was going back to her nest in Lorraine. . . . At this moment, and while Chevrillon was making tea, Mrs. Felder went to the piano. There was a sort of magnetic attraction between her and it; she did not sit down, but as she passed she stooped over the keys, and drew from them very faintly an adagio by César Franck.

Mrs. Vernon turned round quickly, saying, "Ah, Nettie Bell, do play the first bars!" and being gentle and always attuned to music, Nettie Bell played them.

"I heard that for the first time at Lille," said Mrs. Vernon. "We had arrived that morning, having gone through dead villages

the day before, those villages of the French countryside from which no smoke ever rises now. The wind whistled over the bare plain and on the roads where it no longer shook white poplars—they had also been carried off into Germany. I was sad . . . One feels the tragic absence of all personal liberty in that region more on some days than on others. We had stopped before the storehouse of the C. R. B., and my husband discussed some detail concerning the supplies with a German officer. While I was waiting I could look into a room on the ground floor of a large house across the street; the window-curtains were drawn back, so that I saw a young woman seated at her piano.

“She was reading from the open sheet before her as she played; I could have drawn her profile, which was very delicate and almost too sharply defined. She was in mourning, with a small crape scarf drawn around her shoulders and crossed on her bosom. A little girl about three years old was playing near her, and every now and then she interfered with her mother’s music by tapping on the piano with tiny obstinate fingers. It was just an ordinary every-day household scene, and

yet I understood its inner meaning as I saw the wedding-ring, too loose for its wearer's thin hand, and the beautiful face which only the chisel of suffering could have made so spiritual. I was sure that in playing what she did, and as she rendered it, she was pouring forth a prayer of love and sorrow; sometimes she played the movement you have just heard with force and passion, and then wearily, like some one who falls and struggles to her feet again; she seemed almost like an angel walking uncertainly under a weight of distress.

"All at once, as the child persisted in drumming with her fingers upon the keys, her mother stopped playing for an instant and very gently pushed the little thing away.

"She caught sight of me as she did so, and noticed that I was looking at her. She was evidently frightened. And then I did the only thing unbecoming a neutral with which I have to reproach myself, I think, during all my stay in those sad countries—I pressed my finger to my lips and gravely sent her the shadowy ghost of a kiss.

"She started, and for the first time I saw her full face. Her large gray eyes, widely opened, were two chalices full of tears. I

looked at her hand, where her wedding-ring hung so loosely, and it was as though she had said to me in words: 'This war has made me a widow.'

"She saw the German officer (a very decent fellow, by the way, who gave himself no end of trouble to help my husband in feeding what he called 'my population') and drew herself on one side, at the same time pulling the muslin curtains across the window.

"That evening, as we were returning in our motor along the dark road, we came to the crossing of two highways, where there had been fighting in 1914; eight French soldiers lay buried there, some beside one road and some by the other, and their graves were in the form of a cross. I could not help thinking of the eyes I had seen that morning brimming with unshed tears, and I said to my companion: 'Poor invaded France—we shall have seen nothing of her soldiers except their graves.'

"He answered: 'It is almost impossible to believe that fighting is going on all the time; a different France is over there, close to us, on the other side of the zone of action.' And he stretched out his hand. The car rolled on,

and we found ourselves close to trenches cut across gardens—they always look strangely like the sunken roads of Brittany. I thought again of the young woman seen only for a moment that morning, and I stood up in the car in order that I might have a better view of the forest of the Argonne on the horizon, as if it were possible to see from that distance what we Americans in invaded France have never yet seen, and what the French people who live there never, never see—French troops.”

“I have often had the same feeling,” said Morton. “Sometimes we could not help suffering from a dreary delusion that there was no more real France, only men who were old or ailing, in the midst of a multitude of women and children. When its young manhood is drained out of a country it loses all vitality—and when I say ‘young’ I mean between a period which begins at sixteen and ends at forty-five. If only we might have seen, as we toiled at our never-ending task of counting and weighing sacks of wheat and flour for the poor and the sick, for women and children, for infirm old people—even for the insane—if only we might have suddenly seen a young

French soldier, all in horizon-blue, his steel helmet on his head, his rifle on his shoulder, looking at us with bright eyes——”

“It would have been a wonderful vision,” said Daisy.

“Better far than that,” said Mrs. Vernon. “To those poor French people who are waiting there, in the Valley of the Shadow, oppressed by a cruel old god—it would have been the passing of a young god in his glory.”

“It is perfectly true,” said Morton, “that the greatest privation of these people immured in a German jail is that they can never see their own soldiers. They saw the mobilization, the movement of their armies toward the east and the north—they saw them retreat—and then night fell—the outer darkness—and they were left to be the guardians of graves.

“I was at Lille one night when French aviators dropped bombs on one of the suburbs. When all their bombs had been used up the airmen flew over the centre of the city, taking no notice of the enemy airplanes which were after them. They had thrown bombs to the Germans, but on their own French they showered down myriads of little papers, bright with the national colors. It was strictly forbidden

to open any windows, under severe penalties, but as I stood there in the city square I saw them all opened at the same time. The mitrailleuses were crackling, and the women leaning out of their windows tried to see their Messiah in the heavens—the airplane soaring on its French wings in the cold moonlight. There was an old woman whom I had come to know well because I used to see her in one of our workrooms, always bending over her sewing with a patient, tired face. I saw her that night, on the fourth floor of the house where she lived; she was carrying a little sleeping child, and showing him to the bird of France, the blessed bird of fire, a shining star in the darkness, shedding a mystical blessing among the din of the mitrailleuses and the droning of the planes. Shells were falling and shrapnel was scattered in the square, but one felt that a universal rejoicing, only half-subdued, was flowing from every window into the night.”

“I was right,” said Mrs. Vernon. “It was the passing of the young god.”

“The next day there were German posters, German punishments; women had opened the shutters of their windows, allowing rays of light to stream out, for which they must be

fined. But the French people had had their hour of gladness, and they paid their fines without a murmur; then the darkness, which had lifted for those blessed moments, closed in again, and the long night went on.

“That is one of the last recollections of my stay there,” said Morton, “and one of the most striking; even now I sometimes recall the old woman as she held the sleeping child for the airplane to see, when it was only a spark of light, scarcely distinguishable among all the others. A few days afterward we went away; the premonitory symptoms of our entry into the war had begun to show themselves, and the thirty Americans who ran from one end to the other of the territory which held six German armies soon became ‘undesirable.’ Our situation was peculiar. Negotiations had been begun by which the Dutch and the Spanish governments were to take over our work and insure the importation and delivery of supplies, but in the meantime, and until we should be actual belligerents, we went on with our inspections, always accompanied by our German officers, who were even more closely attached to us than before. When I was in Morocco I used to amuse myself by watching

the white birds which deliberately and patiently followed in the track of the laboring oxen as they turned up the furrows. The ox and the bird—an odd association seen all through that country; the birds feed on the flies which swarm around the beasts and are scattered by the lashing of the ox's tail. No white bird was ever more faithful to his chosen ox than the German officer was to his particular delegate! The last days of this enforced intimacy were rather trying. After our endless discussions about the war, the endless German theories, and the endless complaints as to our having supplied munitions to the Allies, our entry into the struggle was dramatic, to say the least. The Germans had never really believed in our intervention. They knew how deep the roots of American life were struck into peace and prosperity, and they had counted on their influence in the United States, on their propaganda, and on the inoculation of Germanism which would be 'biologically' developed by the dissemination of ten millions of Germans throughout the length and breadth of our country. Even when our intervention became certain, even at the present time, it is hard for them to admit to them-

selves that we are really going in for serious fighting with artillery and rifles. President Wilson's action when he declared war seemed to them as if a far-away Supreme Being, absent-mindedly holding the scales in which right and wrong are weighed, had frowned on mortals as a sign of his displeasure, without meaning to descend to earth in order to follow his condemnation by chastisement. That would all be settled in some other world. Nevertheless, although they could not believe in the possibility of improvising American armies, as it had taken them forty years of preparation to get their own ready, they knew that the United States had decided against them, and they felt the weight of this moral judgment. They were quiet up to the end, and so were we; it was their duty and ours also, but we discussed and argued persistently, and when the last evening came, we drank with calm solemnity the health of him who should be the first among us to be made a prisoner of war.

"After that our work was turned over to the Dutch delegates who were to take our places. The last time that I met with a French committee was in a village on the banks of the Meuse. Everything went on just as it had

done before; I am not even sure that the French knew we had gone into the war, for the German newspapers kept the announcement back as long as they possibly could. The president of the committee declared the meeting adjourned in the usual words, which had become a sort of ritual, and when I went back to — I saw our barges once more coming slowly down the canal in a long line. One of the features of our administration was its absence of noise and fuss; those barges, with their sealed tarpaulins, gliding silently along the waterways, keeping their own secrets and going quietly to their destination, were fitting symbols of the system by means of which we had managed to sustain life in the suffering bodies of those who trusted us.

“And so one day, very calmly, without any leave-taking, we passed through the guarded lines, like the doors of a jail, where invaded France begins and ends. We left the prisoners behind us, but only to return to set them free by force of arms. From the sinister zone of action, swarming with German armies, we passed to the zone of occupation, and came to the barriers of barbed wire, charged with their lightnings. It was evening, and for the last

time the German sentinels examined our papers by the light of their red lamps.

"We were in Holland, and could breathe the air of freedom. I looked again at the wide, flat meadows, shining with moisture, gay with blossoming clover and sainfoin, and diversified by little thickets here and there. This little strip of land would have looked like any other in a free country except for the sentry-boxes, painted with the German colors, which were strung all along the enclosure. The pair of sentinels, with their hands at the visors of their helmets, their stiff, automatic gait, their silent politeness, the candid indifference of their china-blue eyes, seemed to me like the German machine personified."

"You say 'machine,'" said Daisy, "and they say that they are 'nature'—nature which cannot be repressed, and which is impelled by its inward vitality to become a devouring force."

"They have a lot of fables and myths forever in their mouths," said Morton; "arguments which would become the Lernæan hydra, paradoxes which are both cynical and pagan, and yet they always lay claim to God's especial favor. I stick to my word—they have

a machine—I admit that it is formidable, but only a machine after all, and sooner or later it will explode in their hands.

“The end had come. We passed the last sign-posts . . . there were only our two selves in our carriage.”

He rose suddenly and drew a deep breath, as if he needed all the air left in the room by the many cigarettes which had begun and ended their lives there. “Thank God,” he said, “the C. R. B. still carries on its work—but we are no longer neutrals!”

CHAPTER III

WITH OUR FRIENDS IN THE LIBERATED COUNTRY

THE Germans have fallen back. Now we shall be able to see with our own eyes the country which they overran. The footprints of the Beast are still fresh; we shall look into his dens, and smell his evil stench. We shall find stains of the blood shed by him, and witness the destruction he has wrought. It will be an intimate satisfaction to our souls to be able to hate and curse him more even than before; it makes us happy now to be able to hate, as happy as we once were in being able to love.

We were again with our American friends, for they wished to see, or rather to revisit, the regions in which their work had lain, and with which they were once so familiar. Morton and Rivards were with me in the automobile, and we were going first to Noyon. We reached Senlis at five o'clock in the afternoon, and another motor-car, coming from Paris, stopped near ours. Two men got out of it; I saw Chevillon first, as he came toward me with a tall,

man, who, although young, looked terribly grave. Under his thick hair his brow was almost stern; his eyes were keen, his lips unsmiling—and, I repeat, he looked terribly grave. I had never seen him before, but I knew him at once by his photographs; the thin-lipped, obstinate mouth, the expression of reticence and silent strength were eloquent of his ancestry. It could only be Hoover, the grandson of Quakers.

We shook hands without the usual civil effusion; I had not even time to get out the customary phrase of French politeness: "Mr. Hoover, we have heard a great deal about you in France." We felt that even those few words would have been too many, and were quick to take our tone from him. Notwithstanding his taciturnity his manner was exceedingly courteous; his eyes spoke for him, and we understood their language. We were at once conscious of the tie that bound us to him for what he had done in the past, and felt that it would make us one with him and his workers in the present and for the future.

Hoover was only in France for three days, on his way to the United States to assume control of the food supply; in the meantime

he meant, like us, to see some of the French towns and villages which had been set free by the German retreat.

Our observations began at Senlis, where the traces of invasion, although not recent, were still plainly to be seen. The Germans held the town for ten days in September, 1914, and here began the ruins which were to mark their passage everywhere. I watched Mr. Hoover as he went quickly through what was once the rue de la République; we counted as many as one hundred and seventeen houses which had been burned down as a "punitive measure" on the 3d and 4th of that September. Hoover, as usual, said nothing. He had already seen many ruined cities; he knew Louvain, Malines, and Aerschot, and had witnessed the result of "punitive measures" throughout invaded France. For him and his companions Senlis was the end of a Via Dolorosa which had its beginning at Visé.

We were able to count the one hundred and seventeen houses because their walls were still standing, but their only roof was the sky, and scraps of its blue were framed by their empty windows. The street looked as if it were dead and had been buried deep in the earth

for hundreds of quiet years, only to have its skeleton given back at last to the light of day.

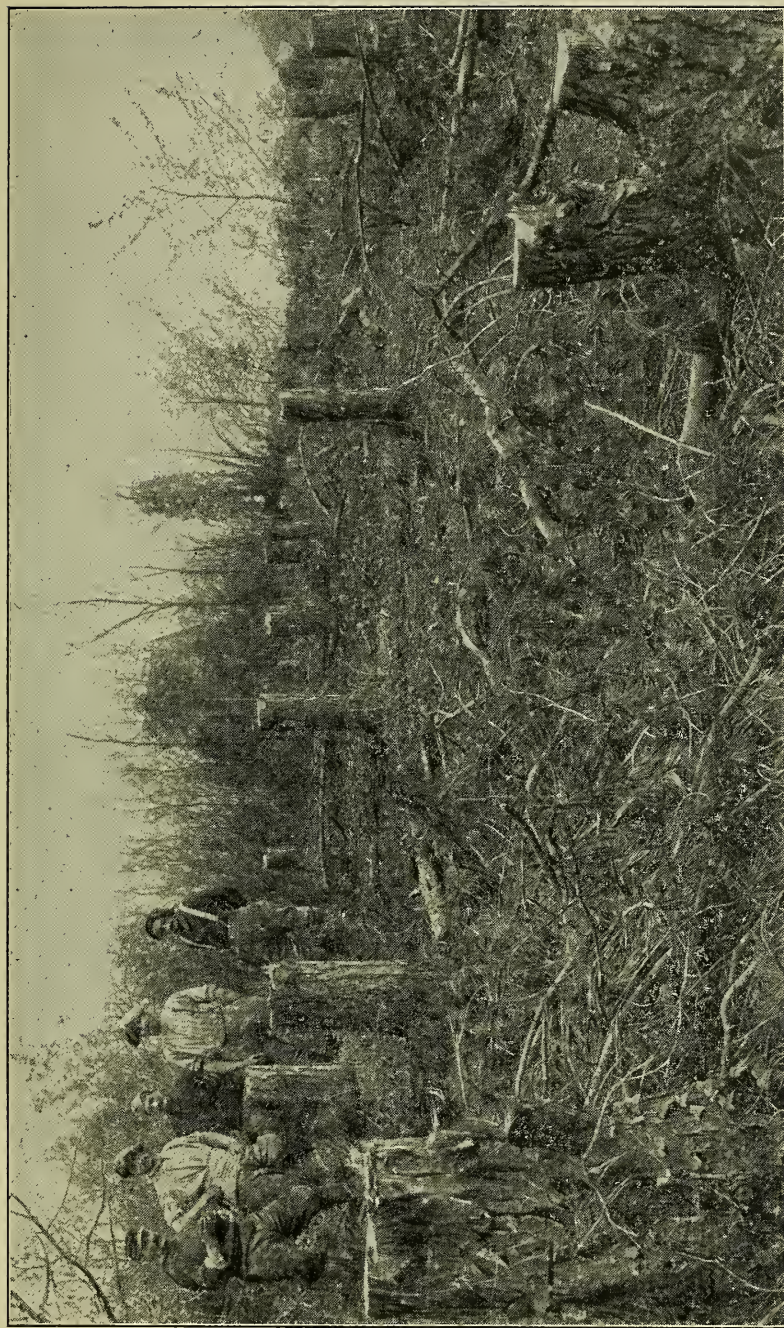
The look of intelligent pity in Hoover's face was like that of a physician who sees in a corpse the signs of a plague whose ravages he has studied elsewhere. The German troops came in by the northern end of the rue de la République; they were drunk with vainglory, shouting hymns, thanking the Old God who was giving them the victory, even rolling over each other like mad dervishes as they cried "Nach Paris!"

The men and women of Senlis well remember those shouts; the German hordes saw Paris in a sort of ecstasy, as the dervishes see paradise; they had almost reached their goal; a few hours more and their grip would be on the heart of France.

And here we can begin to study their "punitive measures." A German officer asked the mayor of Senlis, Monsieur Odent, whether all the French troops had withdrawn from the town, and he, in perfectly good faith, knowing that his life hung on the truth of his word, answered that they were all gone. He could not see that a rear-guard of French and Senegalese infantry was still at the southern end

of the street, retreating toward Paris. These men saw the first German soldiers coming in and fired at them. Then the flood-gates of German wrath were opened. All day long the town was heavily shelled, as the German officers insisted that it was the civil population, "the cifilians," as they pronounced it, who had fired; eye-witnesses have still a lively recollection of a corpulent German major standing upright in his stirrups and swearing at them until he was purple in the face.

The "cifilians" had fired, and almost as if by reflex action the major suddenly drew his pistol and blew out the brains of an old "cifilian" who was standing patiently and quietly outside the door of a hospital. The officer gave a hoarse cry like that of a wild beast when he saw him fall, and on the instant his soldiers fired a volley through the hospital windows into the ward where the French nuns were tending their wounded. That was the first prompt "punitive measure." Soon afterward cyclists rolled along the rue de la République in orderly line, bearing tins of petrol and compressed tablets of naphtha, and set fire to every house. From one after another thick black smoke arose, followed by fierce



Pines cut down by the Germans in the park of the château of Pont-Saint-Mard, Aisne.



flames; all night long they mounted into the still September air, blotting out the full moon and the quiet stars.

That is how an old street in an old French town became a skeleton of stone. Let us examine this "punitive measure" calmly and coolly—let us try to see how and why it all happened, for we shall surely come across the same system again and again; it is simple—the mere alphabet of a method; through it we shall learn to love the Creator who made the world and to hate the German who has done his best to destroy it.

But the job at Senlis was not quite finished; Monsieur Odent, who had staked his life when he said the French had left the town, had lost and was not yet dead. The forfeit had to be paid. He was able to send his wife and children to a place of safety, and he did not betray any emotion as he and six other hostages were led away by a file of German soldiers, to be judged under a cluster of oak-trees on the edge of a wood, near the village of Saint Clamant. A cluster of oaks for a judgment-seat, like that of Saint Louis! The mayor was obliged to listen to his death-sentence, which was long; then he turned toward his friends,

the other hostages, saying to one of them: "Good-by, my poor Benoît; we shall not meet again in this world, for I am to be shot." He took out his crucifix and his pocketbook, asked that his watch might be given to his wife, clasped the trembling outstretched hands of his friends, and turned toward the judges who awaited him under the cluster of oaks. Two soldiers shot him from a distance of ten paces, thus carrying on a tragic and glorious family tradition, for his father, also mayor of Senlis, had been shot by the Prussians in 1870.

This story was told to us and to our American companions by one of the six hostages who were there on that day. He added: "While our friend's body was being thrown into a shallow grave before our eyes, we could see the light of incendiary fires spreading over the night sky."

An old curé met us in the cathedral, and he also had a story to tell. A German officer had held a pistol to his head, and shouted that he must have the key of the belfry, as there were mitrailleuses on the platform of the tower. The priest gave up the key and led the German to the top of the belfry, where they found only the bells, that during hundreds of

years had rung for the birth, the prayers, the love, and the death of sons and daughters of France.

A week later an armored car came down the road from Paris at full speed. Monsieur Odent was not there to hear "The German troops are falling back!" but his body must have thrilled with joy under its thin covering of French earth. Scattered shots still rang out from the square, but as the car sped back the men in it stood up, crying out: "Keep your courage up—we're coming back!"

It is an old story now, as war-stories go, and a simple one. Senlis and Chantilly mark the extreme edge of the German invasion. Now German prisoners are at work in the fields, getting in the first crop of hay under the May sunshine; the invasion is checked, the hymns of triumph are heard no more, and the cry "Nach Paris!" sticks in the throat of the German armies.

From Senlis we went rapidly to Compiègne, and our way this morning lay through the forest of Ourscamp. Lilies-of-the-valley, standing straight between their blade-like leaves, made all the air sweet with their fragrance, and above their white beauty the great trees,

beeches, oaks, and birches, stretched out their branches glossy with their new leafage, protecting the mysteries of many nests. Suddenly, in the heart of the forest, we came upon a sort of frontier—the line of trenches which sheltered the Germans for two years, and where Fate, thought by them to be their servant, began to turn against them.

We went down into their dugouts, empty ant-hills with a labyrinth of passages cut deep in the earth, all leading to the hiding-place of the murderous master-spirit, the German officer who worked, ate, drank, and slept, burrowed deep under our beech-trees. Above the door of his sheltered bedroom some one had drawn a clock, and under the figures on its face these words were carefully written:

“Im Gleichmas die Stunde in scharfen Wacht bis in Frauen Armen uns in Friede lacht.” (“During our keen vigil one hour is like another, until Peace shall smile at us in women’s arms.”)

“While the world was at peace they only thought of war,” remarked Hoover, “and during the war they dreamt of peace.”

So this is the fatal border-line behind which

France suffered and waited. It is a mere line, not wider than a ditch or the bed of a brook; workmen were busy getting material out of it, and rolling the strands of barbed wire into great balls.

We went fast, for we were expected at Noyon—or, rather, to be accurate, Mr. Hoover and his companions were expected there, as they had just left one side of the invaded districts to see what war had done on the other border. We had only time for a glimpse of the ruined villages of Carlepont and Cuts, but what struck us most, as at Senlis, was the gaping emptiness of the windows, the unscreened daylight streaming in where our eyes had been accustomed to see the soft shadow behind which lives had a right to privacy. Now nothing was hidden nor was there any life to hide; weeds were already growing in the gaping holes of the ruined walls, and we could see the gleaming eyeballs of famished cats as they prowled about in the piles of rubbish. It was still possible to distinguish the way in which the little villages had been laid out, and where the streets had crossed, but the houses with their blank squares, and light streaming in where there was no longer any life, made us

think of dead bodies whose staring eyes have not been closed by pious hands. In these ruins there was neither peace nor forgetfulness.

Although Noyon had only been liberated for a few days, everything was quiet, and the work of reparation went on busily. Some of our soldiers were loading trucks with beams, while others were using them to run up a makeshift bridge across the Oise. As we passed a camp of negro troops we heard their guttural African songs, with a very rudimentary accompaniment on the guitar; the men smiled as we ran by, and we saw the light flash on their white teeth. The old church in the square, its arches a little sunken with the weight of centuries, was happily uninjured; it still sheltered the figures of apostles and saints, and seemed to shed the blessing of ancient France on the national life beginning anew in its shadow.

I could not help saying to my travelling companion, "You are in one of the old centres of French history," but our friends from the New World did not need to be told, and were often more sensitive than we ourselves to the subtle influences of our past. They felt the living poetry of old France as we should feel if, instead of finding only tombs and empty temples on classic ground, we were allowed to

know the life, the thoughts, and the manners of the beings who once inhabited those wonderful lands. Our American friends used even to say to me:

“Why do you draw such a marked and almost hostile line between the present and the past? You say ‘the past’ sometimes as if it were not a part of the present. When we look back across the ages France to us always ‘is’; in the world’s history it is the Word.”

“France ‘is.’” Those words, spoken by a foreigner, touched me deeply, for it is true that there are traces of our past through the hours of our daily life, as there have been through the long hours of war. Noyon! It was here that Charles, not yet Charlemagne, was crowned while still only planning his great empire; it was here that Hugues was proclaimed *rex francorum*; near here Clovis the Frank conquered Alaric the Visigoth, and just now, as we passed Compiègne, we might have seen traces of the ditch where Jeanne d’Arc stumbled and was taken prisoner. All the past is indeed present in our lives to-day; the mightiest river that sweeps along is, like the humblest brook, made up of all the water that has been poured into it.

We were glad, after a solemn fashion, to

take possession again of the old streets of Noyon, to hear the footfalls of our young officers as they went about the business of installation, and, above all, to be able to bring there a little group of the Americans who had seen the invasion and whose hands had dealt out the food that kept our people alive. We were also excited at the thought that we had taken a step, even if only one, into the invaded territory, and we knew that there was still a superhuman task to be done before the country could really live again.

An officer showed us the way to the subprefecture, where Major B. was waiting for us. Mr. Hoover went in before us, and I was able for the first time to see the singularly sweet expression of which his stern and obstinate face is capable. Major B. said a few words to him in a low voice; I saw Hoover stop suddenly and almost recoil, as if he were surprised by an emotion to be mastered before he went any further. He had taken off his hat, and his smooth, thick hair made a close frame for his stubborn and intelligent head.

He went forward quickly into the open room, where a large and uncommon group of men was waiting for us, or, rather, for him.

They were all civilians, for the most part old peasants of our countryside, and as the oldest came toward him holding out both hands as if bearing a message from all the rest, Hoover understood very well what it meant; his lips quivered slightly, and even he, the president of imperturbables, could hardly keep back the tears which sprang to his eyes.

These old civilians—for there were no young men in the invaded country—were not strangers to Rivards and Morton, who had lived either with these same men or with others just like them. They were the mayors of the ninety liberated villages, and when they had heard, the day before, that Hoover was coming, they had all started to meet him, some on foot and some in country carts; although the roads were still almost impassable, they had somehow managed to come. Now that these old Frenchmen were once more free, it was the wish of their hearts to thank the chairman of the C. R. B.

And they knew how to do it. We had heard the stories of Harder, of Morton, and of Mrs. Vernon, but had we really *seen*? Had we any idea what the collaboration of these Americans had really meant, voluntarily imprisoned as

they were with our people, working with them for months and years to receive and distribute that humble thing—daily bread?

These men who came from the liberated villages knew and remembered; gratitude, affection, and confidence shone in their eyes; they were like wounded men who, once well again, hold out grateful hands to those who have carried them to safety, healed their wounds, and tended them back to health. One after another Hoover, Morton, and Rivards shook the hands (some of them very old and gnarled) of the mayors and their deputies, and for us, who had not witnessed the gradual formation of a strong tie, it was very interesting to see this cordiality and, so to speak, “family feeling” between strangers and the old-fashioned country people of our old land.

“Now confess,” said Morton to one of them, laughing, “that when you first heard that ‘the Americans’ were coming you expected to see us wearing beads around our necks and feathers on our heads.”

“Oh,” answered the old man, “it was the women who did not know any better.”

At last the time had come when every one might relax, and they began to exchange recol-

lections as to rice, bacon, peas, beans, and the little bills of the paper currency. One of the Frenchmen summed it all up by saying:

“The American bread was as if it had been French,” and another added: “And if we hadn’t had it there would have been nothing of us left but our bones; the Americans were like Providence, which doesn’t desert the house of misfortune.”

“But France gave the money for the bread,” said Morton.

“I know,” said the old man; “but without you the money would not have turned into bread.”

They were all familiar with the complicated organization of the food supply, and the old Frenchmen and young Americans talked about business matters, and told stories which both sides understood without any explanation, as people do who belong to the same family. It would not have taken much to make us newcomers in the liberated regions feel like outsiders, French though we were. They spoke of their last accounts, of what had happened to the last sacks of flour and the last tins of food. “Above all, be careful not to let the Germans get any tin—not so much as the lid of a sar-

dine-box," was the order. It was understood, and every precaution taken, up to the last minute. "They wouldn't have found that!" was followed by the familiar gesture of the thumb-nail against the teeth.

Then their thoughts went to those who were absent. If the mayors were almost all old and "near the earth," as we say, it is because when the Germans were obliged to fall back they took with them their prey from many villages, in the shape of the younger men and those of most importance, whose châteaux or factories were in the neighborhood. The mayors of Fol-embray and Candor had been carried off as hostages; the day of deliverance had dawned, but they had been swept off by German officers in the retreat. The mayor of Ognolles, who had been taken as a hostage in 1914, had been repatriated, after two years—and he told us what the German prison-camps were like.

We lunched quickly, as is fitting in time of war, and just as we were about to leave, the oldest of the Frenchmen rose to his feet, his sunburnt hand holding a glassful of the generous red wine of France. His bushy eyebrows stood out like white thickets over his eyes, which, although faded with age, were still

bright—the eyes of one who sees more than he dreams; his broad face bore the mark of privations, and life had wrinkled it with deep furrows, like those of his own fields, for the peasant grows to resemble the land he loves. His thin lips were parted in a smile which had once been merry, and as he stood up we saw that he stooped a little and that his thin shoulders drooped under the folds of a velvet-reen coat which had evidently been made for a larger frame. He looked Hoover straight in the eyes and thanked him in the name of all the others and in the name of the liberated villages. His words were few, for when one has suffered much, one loses the power of speech, and the golden tongue of France is not yet unloosed. The sinews of his thin neck swelled with emotion as the old man recalled the long days of trial, and gave the names of some who should have been there . . . but had been laid low by German bullets. Then with the same gesture that Mrs. Vernon had made the other evening, he took up a morsel of bread reverently in his fingers, as if it had been blessed, and said in a voice that broke a little:

“This is the bread of France, and thanks to you American gentlemen our sweat has

never moistened the bread of slavery; we and our wives and our children have eaten the bread of France."

Hoover answered him very briefly; it was a fine sight to see the peasant from the Ile-de-France and the great citizen of the United States speaking to each other, almost with religious solemnity, each looking full in the other's face, as one equal looks at another.

"We have left invaded France, because we are coming to fight for the France that is free," was the substance of what Hoover said. The time is past when America gave only her wheat; now American hearts, American wills, and American lives are offering themselves and coming to us in their legions.

Hoover, as he spoke to this son of our soil, seemed to be pledging America to the relief of our invaded and tortured country, and we all rose instinctively, as men did in the old days when they broke Easter bread together.

We thought of all the prodigious work undertaken on the other side of the Atlantic. While we stood here on the border of the region just set free from invasion, over there young men who have never trodden the soil

French meadows, were crowding into the recruiting offices, signing their names in registers, binding themselves to us for life and death. I remembered our doubts only a few weeks ago, when we said: "Is it possible that an army can spring in a day, like helmeted Minerva, from the brain of Wilson?"

The impossible had come to pass, the great crusade had begun, and from one side of the Atlantic to the other messages were flying to and fro like passionate outbreathings—messages of hope, of battle, of life, and of death.

Hoover left us in a hurry, to run through the liberated villages which he wished to see. We went after him to the same villages, which are indeed liberated, but only as prisoners are whom the enemy has mutilated before he was forced to give them up.

* * *

Love, pity, reparation—those are the words which spring from the depths of the heart after seeing what we have seen.

* * *

How shall I write? What I shall say will be

like words spoken at the tombs of the beloved dead—it will be hard to stop.

* * *

Let us smell the almost imperceptible fragrance of a branch of green leaves, or the perfume of this bunch from the lilac-bushes which grow triumphantly beside the ruins; let us look at the trees cut off near the ground, losing the life-blood of their sap, and lying like dead things along the roads. Nature rejoices, birds are singing, and larks shower down from the sky their tribute to the joy of living.

But the earth mourns; the delicate grace of the flowers which bloom among the desolation moves us like the innocent smile of a baby found alone by the cold hearth of a house where his father and mother have been put to death or torn away.

* * *

This bunch of flowers was picked at Margnies, as we and our friends followed the road from Noyon. They knew it better than we, and Morton drove the car. It was four o'clock in the afternoon, and as soon as we left Noyon we began to pass the first rows of trees cut down beside the roads. When we reached

Margnies-les-Cerises (such a pretty name!) we thought we had come into a place given over to death. The tiny houses, all crumbled into little bits, made us think of a city of ants on which some powerful and ill-natured beast had set his crushing foot.

We had sounded our horn from time to time in the dead silence of the countryside, and as we did so again in the village two old men came out of a deep hole in the earth beside the church, close to the graveyard. They looked at us quietly, with faces used to adversity; mildly astonished to hear and see us, they seemed to be inquiring what we wanted, as they might have done when the village was prosperous, and tourists came there to buy cherries, on the strength of its name.

They saw our eyes fixed on a sort of gibbet which reared itself, like another deity, in front of the church; it was made of two smooth newly felled tree-trunks, with the bark taken off, connected by a stout truss reinforced by iron bands.

A third huge trunk hung loosely by a chain from this truss, so that when pushed it would deliver a shattering blow to the frail walls of the village houses.

“That was their battering-ram,” said one of the two ghosts. Yes, they had revived the battering-ram of antiquity; it did not tap at doors furtively and discreetly, like death, but struck with heavy and repeated blows, goring our houses like a mighty bull. A sinister and silent job! There were no flames to show against the night sky, no twisting smoke to rise in daytime, and the dull sound of the blows was lost before it reached our lines. It was as if living bodies had been kicked to death; the houses fell in little bits which were scattered over the ground.

The two old men told us their names—I can only remember that their Christian names were Eustache and Julien. It appeared that they were not alone; from other holes other ghosts suddenly came to life; some even showed their heads, like spectres, through the opening of a shattered tombstone, for the Germans had disturbed the last sleep of the dead by breaking open their graves in order to take shelter in them as though they had been ditches.

The spectres came up to us, all of them old, with incredibly dilapidated clothes. They were looking in these “ditches,” they explained, for

what had been left there; odds and ends of furniture taken from the village, mattresses, bedding; stuff with which the German crows had made their nests in our graves. With these remnants our old people meant to make themselves beds, in some corner less funereal and less profaned.

The churchyard wall was furrowed and pierced by shell-fire; we sat down on part of it, and Eustache and Julien stood before us, smoking their pipes with an air of satisfaction. The soldiers, they said, had given them tobacco.

Their hollow faces showed the hardships they had undergone, but their eyes were clear and steady, and the light of a smile came into them as our American friends held out their hands. As Morton well knew, a French peasant rarely smiles suddenly and amiably at a foreigner; one would have said here, as at Noyon, that it was a meeting of old friends. Those two years and a half were equal to a lifetime of suffering spent together.

"The American gentlemen will find changes here," said Eustache laconically, spitting energetically on one side, and shaking his old head in the direction of the battering-ram.

Those few words were enough. We stared together at the creature, a daughter of Ash-taroth, a diabolical invention, the ram; and we understood it all; the ram had battered at all the doors; as the Germans could not take the little French village as a hostage, they had murdered it.

The pipes were finished, and the last whiffs of their smoke exhaled, almost in silence; a few laborers, scattered here and there in what they still called the fields, came to join us. There were twenty-three of them, all old inhabitants of Margnies, still sheltering themselves underground at night, and in daytime trying to recover their belongings from the ditches, or occupied outside the village in trying to cultivate their little market-gardens.

This is what old Eustache told us of the last days of the village, a few words at a time, and shaking his pipe more often than I could count.

“On the 6th of February, two months ago, we had not known for two years about anything that was going on outside our village. Every morning the Germans used to stick their orders up at the Kommandatur” (the German word sounded oddly in a French

mouth). "That morning they warned us that at four o'clock in the afternoon they would take away the 'able-bodied men' still left among us; there were not many, for we had already seen deportations; there were just half a dozen, and their names were posted up.

"At four o'clock the six men went off between ten soldiers, carrying their clothes in a bundle on their backs; they were much upset because they could not get any decent shoes, and we did not know where they were going; they went off toward the north, on the road which goes uphill behind the church.

"The next day there was another notice on the door of the Kommandatur.

"This time it was an order to all the women of Margnies between the ages of seventeen and sixty years, who had not children under fifteen, to be at the open doors of their houses at four o'clock that day, also ready to go away.

"They were ordered to take with them a parcel with a change of shoes and a blanket—no other baggage.

"It was the first time that any of our women had been deported, and as we did not know what had been going on anywhere else,

it was a blow. In a farming country like this, where every one works in the fields, the women's help had been needed. In winter they were employed to break the ice which was put in the cellars, in spring to nip the extra buds off the fruit-trees, and in summer to pick the cherries and help with the harvest.

"We were always working under orders, and not for ourselves, but in a certain way we got the good of our work, because the American gentlemen had made arrangements so that we had our potatoes, and we were paid for our crops in bread.

"So it was the first time women were taken away from us; that was kept for the last day. Nothing was to be left behind but old creatures like us, and rubbish. We did not know that it was the last day of the occupation.

"Look there," said the old man, and he pointed to the other side of the graveyard, where a heap of stones was half sheltered by a dislocated roof whose broken tiles hung down like red autumn leaves on a trellis—"that was my house, and that long stone was the threshold; I put it back into place.

"On that stone my daughter and my daughter's daughter stood in the doorway, waiting

for it to be four o'clock. We could not speak; in the room behind us the clock was ticking off the seconds, and that made our hearts beat. We were waiting for the church-clock to strike four. I am a widower and my daughter is forty-four years old; her husband had been taken away the day before; my granddaughter is twenty-five years old. Twenty-six women were taken away as if they had been cattle bought at the market. They went off by that road; our trees were still standing then, and only the day before the women had been busy nipping off cherry-buds.

"The officer who had charge of the job was a young lieutenant; he did not like to look us in the face, and kept whistling one of their tunes, and flicking his boots with his riding-whip.

"I was the oldest man, and I asked him if he would allow me to load a donkey with some bundles of clothes, some more blankets, and shoes.

"He grunted out that it was 'verboden,' and hit harder at his boots.

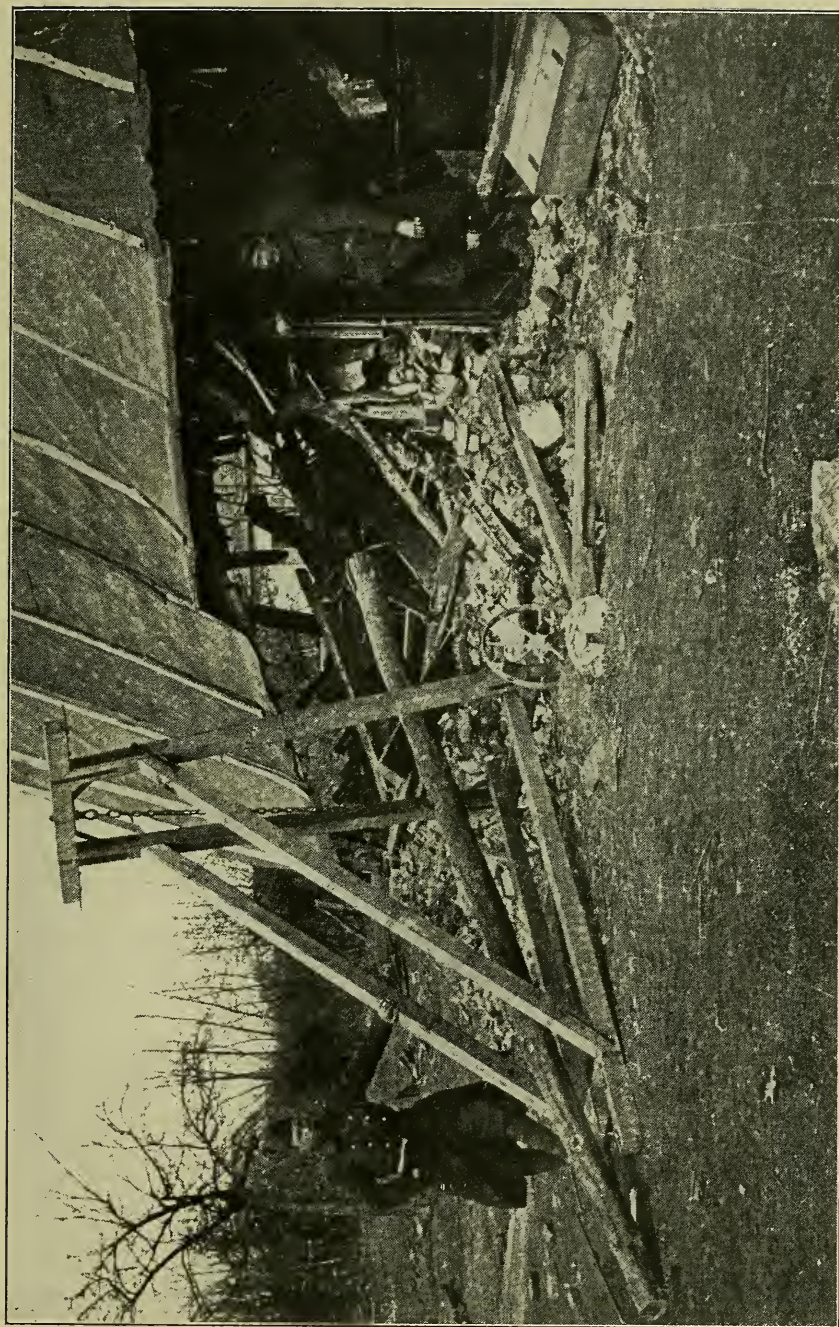
"So they went away like thieves, between German soldiers with fixed bayonets. I can't tell you how we felt."

Old Eustache took out his pipe, looked at his companions, spat upon the ground, and was silent.

In a moment he went on:

“Then we men went into the fields. From a corner of my cherry-orchard there was a good view of the turn in the road, and some of my friends who are here now will remember”—and he looked at his companions—“that they joined me there. We said to each other: ‘We shall see them once more, at the turn of the road, although the daylight is failing.’ We stood there watching for them, but not close together, because we were forbidden to stand in groups, and all at once we thought we must be dreaming, for we heard them singing. They were far away already, and it sounded sweetly, like chanting in church.

“Do you know what our women were singing, with the German bayonets all around them? The ‘*Marseillaise*’!” The old man laughed, showing his yellow teeth, where the pipe had made a gap. He laughed for sheer pride and satisfaction, as parents do when they tell you some exploit of their children which they think very clever. And he summed up his impressions by saying: “They certainly went off bravely.”



Battering-ram for knocking in the walls of houses, found at Margnies-les-Cerises, Oise.

After a pause he went on:

“But that wasn’t all. That same evening another notice was stuck up, ordering us to make bundles of all the clothes and linen which we still had, and to take them to the church. It was a queer order, but for two years and a half hardly a day had passed without a placard telling us to do or not to do something.

“This order made it easier for them; if we took all our clothes to the church, they wouldn’t have the trouble of going to our houses for them. Then came still another order; it was our turn to go, all of us; the village was to be cleared out, and we were to load a donkey with all the food we had on hand. You know we received our supplies from the American committee every fortnight; those who had any money paid, and those who were too poor were given vouchers by the village, so they were not left out. Every one got something, and when the order came to go, we had provisions for a week ahead. They took us to a farm ten kilometres away and left us there; there were sixty-six of us, counting the children. We heard the noise of firing, and knew the French must be coming and the Germans clearing out. As the French and

German shells went about their business they crossed over our heads. We were between the two firing-lines. We lived on the food we had brought with us, but we couldn't tell how long we might be there, and we began to count the grains of coffee and rice. We slept, if we could get any sleep, all crowded together on some straw in a barn. One night we heard a shell—it was a French one—coming through the air with a noise like a locomotive; it fell on a woman who was lying there, and crushed both her legs. We had no linen, nothing to help her with, but the women had washed their chemises at the fountain, and they tore them up to make bandages. The woman couldn't help crying out, and her old man, who was next her, said: 'Don't scream so loud, or else the others may be afraid.'

"The eighth day was a Thursday, and we were as if we had been on a raft after a storm. The rice was used up and we had no more bread, but we knew the French were coming nearer. By noon they were so close that we could see their uniforms, but we didn't know what all that light blue meant, and we didn't recognize their helmets. We hadn't any French flag, so we tied a white cloth to the end of a

pole, and then we saw one soldier, and then two and then three, running toward us, running fast, because the Germans behind us were still firing. Sometimes we thought we saw our men fall, but it was only because they would drop into a hole to take shelter for a minute, and then their helmets and heads would show again as they went on.

“We went on waving our pole, and they knew what we meant. Then you said, Julien”—and he looked at the other old man—“‘Why don’t we do as the women did, and sing the “*Marseillaise*”?’ We were like madmen, but the little soldier who was running toward us understood, and he waved his rifle at us. When he and his two comrades got to where we were they were all out of breath. The women were heating them some coffee when another French shell struck quite close to the farm. Then the first soldier started up—he was a sharpshooter; I wish you had seen him—and he cried out, ‘This won’t do!’ and he ran back again under fire, calling out to the men who were coming on: ‘They’re French people here! Stop firing!’ In about an hour the troops came up and we were free. I tell you I think we were all out of our heads. And then

we wanted to go back to the village; we had seen from the farm that there had been neither smoke nor flames over it, so we knew it had not been set on fire, and we were glad. We got back on a Friday, sixty-five of us, for the woman whose legs had been crushed was dead. This is what we found"—and he pointed to the ruins. "The battering-ram was here, as it is to-day; it's a sort of curiosity. And all our trees were cut down, as you see them now. There was not a single roof left; we sent the women and children to Noyon, and we men have stayed on, getting things together as far as we can, and the army feeds us. You may go wherever you like in this part of the country, you will find the same story everywhere."

The old man had spoken without any heat, and now he was silent again, as if his thoughts were in the past.

Around us, along the road, in the orchards, even in the graveyard were the cherry-trees, all cut down, all fallen the same way, showing their fresh white wounds, and all crowned with their white blossoms in honor of Spring. The sap had risen in them before they were murdered, filling the branches, pushing out the buds, only to crown the dead. All that was

most precious and most alive in spring was in a fragrant foam of white and pink, flowering for the last time above the ruins and beside the open graves.

We had often before seen orchards in May ravaged by hail or tempest; we had lamented that so much beauty and promise should strew the ground, and had felt as if the dripping and denuded branches must be weeping for what they had lost, but that was nothing compared to seeing these trees lying on the ground, hacked to death, and yet still wearing their lavish beauty. It was almost as if one should see a smile on the face of a child whose head has been severed from its body.

"One would never have thought of that," said the old man with a twisted smile, which drew his lips until they showed the gap in his teeth. With his foot, shod with a dilapidated boot, he gently touched a branch where the buds were still rolled into little pink balls under the shining lacquer of their encasing leaves. The air was full of a smell like honey, and some of the groups of blossoms hung down into the desecrated graves. Death was all death no longer, nor was life really life. These three-and-twenty men had been shipwrecked

upon deep waters of misfortune; the professors in the science of devastation had known just how to lift the flood-gates.

* * *

All around the churchyard walls were rows of wooden crosses, and these had been respected. There were so many more than the enclosure could hold that they had overflowed through a gap in the low wall, and spread out toward the open fields. Old cities have been obliged to submit to breaches in their encircling walls in order that modern life may flow out into their suburbs, but here it was not the living which needed more room, but the dead. All these graves were of men who fell in 1914; we may have seen them as they went off singing in the crowded trains that followed one another as closely as flower-decked carts in autumn, laden with grapes for the wine-press. The crosses were surmounted by képis, once red but now faded and discolored by sun and rain; the bodies of their wearers were picked up in the neighboring roads and fields, where their red caps and trousers had made them conspicuous targets.

The association of the "Souvenir Français"

had already placed its emblem in the centre of each cross, and in a line with it new rosettes of the sacred colors shone like marks of honor. The arms of the crosses touch at their ends; they kept orderly ranks, like unflinching soldiers.

O graves of our fighting men, O wooden cross, *crux lignis*, when our hands touch you in these liberated villages, when we shall embrace you later in the France not yet set free, what other word can come to our lips but that by which we hail the cross of the Saviour:

O Crux Ave . . . Spes unica.

Worship—that is to say, love and prayer, the spontaneous impulse to give our puny selves to France—is what alone will preserve us from the vanity of words and the weakness of tears.

O Crux Ave . . . Spes unica.

Have we then set our hopes on the dead? Yes, for some of our dead are more alive than men who still breathe. “He who loseth his life shall save it” were the words of our Lord.

The Old Testament comes down to us from men of times long gone, but these new men who lie here have also left us a testament, which is a symbol.

Crux lignis, humble and magnificent cross, cut from the wood of our forest-trees, we shall see thee on the days when we commemorate the Passion, and the priest lifts as far as his arm can reach the symbol of our redemption—the Cross. We shall see the body and the blood of our dead, as we loved them while they were living and our own, each time when, in the Canon of the mass, the sacred offering of the Host is renewed, held high in silence above our bowed heads.

* * *

The old man was right; the story was the same as we drove about the country; one scene of devastation followed another. We met hardly any living men, but here and there on the edge of the road, or by itself in a field, we saw a spot of color like a fading poppy, the red képi and the cross that marked a grave.

First it was Candor, then Champieu, where we found by actual count that nine ghosts had come back. Ognolles, Beaulieu, les Fontaines (a market-town); these were the last villages invaded, and the first set free; all this border was swept by gun-fire, and only given back to us because another line was formed in the rear

—for the France already freed is only a part of the France still invaded. The highway was red, because it was mended with tiles torn from the roofs of houses, and all the roads were marked by prostrate trees. Here, in this orchard, a curé was shot, as the Germans charged that he had communicated with our men by means of machinery hidden in his cellar. Our priests everywhere were accused of a sort of magic; they were said to give our soldiers warning by signs from their church-towers, or through their church-bells, or else underground, from their cellars.

A newly made grave at the corner of a house bore this inscription: "To my dear papa, shot by cowards," and another, not far off: "To my son, shot in his mother's house." We were also shown the four stone steps where a child stood at his father's door, shaking his fist at his new masters as they marched into the village, and pretending to throw stones at them. On that very spot, outside the house where he was born, on the door-step where as a schoolboy he had played marbles only a month before, the men in gray caps tied him to the little iron railing; the marks of the bullets that killed him may be seen on the

wall. I remember seeing in Lorraine, two months ago, the bullet-marks on a wall where some women who had taken refuge in a cellar were dragged out and shot.

The little boy's grave was all covered with lilies-of-the-valley, as pure as the little victim's soul. While they held the village the Germans tried to conceal it, even set a watch over it, but every one knew where it was, and now it has been remade and lovingly planted with white flowers, to be held in everlasting remembrance.

But all the invaders have not left the village; here are the pompous graves of German soldiers, their marble headstones covered with grandiloquent inscriptions. "*Tapferer Held*" (brave hero) is the most frequent term, and one that would never be found even on the most illustrious grave in France. "*Tapferer Held*" is the language of Walhalla. How much finer by comparison are our simple and truthful words "Killed in battle"!

In the cemeteries the French and German graves stand facing each other in close lines, as if still ready for the fight. I heard the footsteps of Morton and Rivards behind me; they stood a little apart, each absorbed in his own

thoughts; it was easy to see that these graves of French soldiers were full of meaning for the Americans, who had just come into the war. They both sat down on the trunk of a tree, evidently somewhat depressed, although the air was soft and balmy; their minds were following the same train of thought as our own.

"The day will soon come," said Morton, simply and gravely. "when we also shall make pilgrimages to the French cemeteries to visit the graves of our dead—of our men who are not yet even soldiers, who have grown to manhood without having ever dreamt of war," and he murmured in a low voice, as if speaking to himself: "They will be in a field like this, a French field, and it may be that their crosses will be made from one of these apple-trees which have been cut down . . . it is very extraordinary."

"Yes," said Rivards, "it is extraordinary, but also logical. The war provoked by Germany is an aggression against our ideals. She would grind the nations to powder, as she has ground these villages. Her aggressiveness is the most extraordinary thing of all; in the present state of our civilization we had never

imagined that a whole people would deliberately and willingly turn back to barbarism. . . . It is only logical that we should rise against her, and that one result should be that we shall lie here, side by side with you, because we have all fallen in defense of our common faith."

"Do you remember," said Morton, "the political doctrine which used to be taught in our universities? It was that of Washington and Jefferson. We were enjoined to stand aloof from the old quarrels which have burdened past centuries, making a turmoil the echoes of which still resound through European countries. We were exempt, so to speak, from the original sin of nations—war which breeds war. We were born spotless; there was no ignorant barbarism in the background of our history, no debt of blood to be paid, no age-long retaliation to be carried out; our New World had never known childhood; it was the result of deep and deliberate study on the part of those who constructed it; they desired that it should be as near perfection as was possible, and, above all, that it should stand always for the right. We were taught to feel the moral beauty of a peace which should allow

each man and each group of men a full share of liberty, and this during a period when Germany was inculcating the moral beauty of war, because through it came strength able to master the world. Those diametrically opposed principles each developed immense and contradictory forces; it was inevitable that they should sooner or later come into violent conflict. We had believed that we could escape war, as the alchemists of former times, devoted to the discovery of the philosopher's stone, believed that if they found it they could escape death. But if those who deliberately resolve on war refuse the benefits of peace, those who are deliberately resolved to have peace do not refuse their share of the suffering induced by war. We are faithful to our own souls and to our worship of liberty when we take up arms against the Germans who are endeavoring, in the name of their insensate pride and their former barbarities, to exterminate what has been slowly created during the centuries by the higher thought and by brotherly love. The spirit of Washington will lead our first armies overseas.

"I agree with what you say as to the Germans invoking their former barbarities," said

Morton. "They are intolerably ostentatious in dragging out of limbo spectres which were the horror of the ancient world. History for them is nothing but a series of reprisals.

"Do you remember, Rivards, how often they acknowledged this? How many times they spoke of the Thirty Years' War, which, according to them, had made their country a desert? But it was they themselves who, like quarrelsome ants from neighboring ant-hills, had devoured each other without mercy, and when France took any part it was for Germany against Gustavus Adolphus. The Thirty Years' War is only a word to conjure with. It was the German mercenary bands who could be bought and sold in any market who pillaged, killed, burned, and laid waste. The Thirty Years' War was really a great civil conflict, but that they prefer to ignore. I remember very well a great hulking German officer, whose red face was seamed all over with rapier scars; we were dining together at Charleroi after going our rounds in a district where all the French factories had been gutted of their machinery. We had seen their whole equipment on its way to Germany in heavily laden trains. We were discussing this, when

suddenly he looked full at me and said, with such vehemence that the scars on his face turned purple: 'You don't know what Germany suffered while you were singing your Puritan hymns beside your new rivers and elaborating your ideal constitutions.' I can see him still, as he repeated a grim saying of the Kaiser's, while he passed his big hand rapidly over the wood of the table, 'We will give you back invaded France, but not until we have razed it to the ground,' and again his hand made the gesture of a mower making a clean sweep with his scythe.

"Then, going back to our eternal argument, he added: 'Look here, Morton, we are not any crueller toward France in taking from her what we need than you were toward Germany in sending munitions to France and England. We must all live, my dear fellow, and we Germans have not always been able to live as we should have done. We need new machinery for our new factories, we need able-bodied men and also women and young girls; we are short of hands as well as of machines. Germany is a god, and gods must have sacrifices.' And I recollect the singular tone in which he added: 'You Americans are

not human; you were not born in the ordinary way; you are the children of a constitution.' He laughed as he emptied his glass, and the veins stood out on his temples. 'As for war, it was not taught us at school, nor in the universities, nor even the barracks—we learned it in our mother's womb.'"

Morton stopped speaking. The day was drawing to its close. We all looked silently at the ruins, and thought of the "able-bodied men" and of the women and young girls who, on the very eve of their deliverance from their long agony, had been forced to set their faces toward Germany as prisoners. The cattle and the carts they once drew had all disappeared; ploughs and scythes, broken beyond mending, lay among the rubbish, and in front of the church the battering-ram, with its iron tusks, reared its gibbet-like shape. Over the broken-down wall we saw the heads of some horses; they shook their manes and looked at us with their ignorant bright eyes. Their coats shone with metallic reflections in the waning sunshine; they were annoyed by the flies buzzing around them, and we could hear the ring of their shod hoofs as they stamped on the stones. Their halters were fastened to

the branches of the felled trees; two children were playing near them, and the golden sunlight fell on their hair and eyes; bees were busily humming among the flowering branches, alighting, taking their tribute of pollen, and flying off triumphantly with their booty, while on the cross-bar of the gibbet a robin sang his heart out to his mate.

* * *

In order to take our motor-car again we had to go the whole length of the village street, and it seemed strange to find human beings among such indescribable destruction. For there were both old men and old women at work, especially old men; I could hear the sharp tapping of their hammers. These ghosts did not seem to be any longer particularly astonished; they had acquired the calm indifference which nature displays before her greatest disasters, and, like her, they had begun to repair the damage done. One of them had collected a lot of unbroken tiles, with which he was putting a roof on a shed, and he said his old wife would be able to come from Noyon the next day, as he had a shelter for her. He picked up his tiles, selected and

placed them, stooping and standing upright again with the regularity of a pulse that can only be stopped by death. Another was planing boards at an improvised carpenter's bench; the yellow shavings hissed and curled as he made a door for the gaping blank above his threshold. It was death, and yet already the renascence; although the little gardens were in disorder, and held great bristling balls of barbed wire, left behind by the invaders, branches of foliage were set out in regular rows, and in their shelter tufts of peas and beans were coming up, twisting around their poles, and holding up the rings of their first tendrils toward the sunlight.

We went into one of these makeshift lodgings, where everything, doors and their fastenings, roofs and window-casings, had had to be made out of whatever came to hand. An old woman was lying on a mattress on the ground; the German soldiers billeted in her house had made her get out of her bed and had taken it with them, together with her wardrobe, her crockery, her linen—even down to her chests and stools—nothing was left of all her humble and dear belongings. A photograph of what had been the family was still

hanging on the wall, a fine group of country people. The old woman's skinny finger pointed out its different members: "My son—he was taken off as a hostage; my son"—again—"he died during the occupation; my daughter-in-law—deported with her two girls"; and the shaking finger touched the likeness of two young faces, scarcely to be told apart, with braided hair above their girlish brows—and then the old hand pointed through the broken window-frame to show the road by which they had disappeared.

* * *

We dined that evening with our friends in an underground shelter dug by the Germans in what had been the park of a French château. There was nothing left now but a tangled disorder of felled and mutilated trees, and all that remained of the château was a few side-walls and a heap of rubbish. When the men who had lived in it for two years were obliged to leave, they mined it and blew it up.

Before we arrived the soft spring night was closing in, and a storm was coming. Heavy purple and reddish clouds were piled up, and

then over them was drawn a dark mist; a slight shower ran across the sky, bent low above the earth. When the shower had passed, the spaces of the air opened again, and the fantastic architecture of the clouds moved in golden glory over the desolate and silent land. The earth was humble with the humility of death; the heavenly purple refulgence fell only on devastation.

As we went along the road, which was reddish where the holes and ruts had been filled in with crushed bricks, we met a column of troops. We heard their marching-song before we saw them, for the wind carried their voices across the silent fields. Suddenly the head of the column swung round a turn in the road, and our eyes were dazzled by the slanting rays of the setting sun striking on their helmets. The first impression was strangely as if all the blue of French horizons had been made into men, and was pouring itself between the divine glow of the heavens and the dingy red of the earth.

It was only a momentary vision, and the men had passed by. The land was humiliated, but they, its soldiers, were proud and cheerful as they sang, each with field-flowers stuck

in his rifle, for the Germans, who had sowed and tilled our fields, could not carry away our clover and sainfoin.

The men passed by; all of the same age, their bright eyes somewhat sunken, and the same war-hardened expression on every young face; their packs weighed heavily on their shoulders, but their step was firm and elastic. We held out cigarettes, or, rather, threw them, for the men were marching so fast that they could hardly catch anything, nor could they break step, as the imperious rhythm of the bugles led them on.

"Where are you going?" we cried. They answered by pointing vaguely toward the west, in the direction of the border of a little wood. Their task here was done; this part of France was again free; they were going onward to the new frontier of invaded France. The crimson glow in the heavens chased the clouds from over their heads, and seemed to follow them. The blue wave went on; the earth still vibrated to the regular cadence of their march, and the air to that of their song—and then silence fell again; the gold and crimson faded over the fields, and the column melted into the grayish blue of the horizon.

A few women, standing on their desolate thresholds, looked dreamily after the blue files as they grew smaller and smaller, and then turned back quietly into their nondescript shelters. The gray of the evening covered the destruction as if with ashes, and the ruined houses were as empty shells tossed upon a beach by a careless wave.

As we hurried toward our halting-place we said to Morton:

"We have seen the old god. It is the creature in the village square before the church, the gibbet, the battering-ram, with its iron tusks, to tear open and beat down peaceful French homes. And then just afterward we have seen what Mrs. Vernon spoke of the other evening—the young god as he passed by."

* * *

It was almost dark by the time we reached B. I did not recognize the place; the very look of France is changed—I mean where it has been invaded by the Germans. Landmarks have disappeared, and the horizon line is not the same. I knew that the château had been destroyed, and yet I was amazed to see only vacant space where I had known it

standing four-square on its solid foundations. I had expected to see what we call ruins—empty arches framing only the familiar landscape, the thicket of birches, the stream flowing under banks bright with Bengal roses, the smiling meadows where the cows lay ruminating in lazy quiet. And to the right there used to be the factory, with its big chimneys never tired of vomiting out their black spirals. . . .

I recognized only the curve of the stream, running drearily between its torn and denuded banks. An old keeper and his wife had remained during the invasion, and I walked about among the piles of rubbish with them. He told me that just before the Germans fell back, one morning when he and his wife were silently rejoicing within themselves because the enemy was preparing to go and leave the place empty, they saw the old house seem to start up for an instant, and then fall back upon itself. Dull subterranean rumblings went with this phenomenon, and when at last the thick clouds of acrid smoke which hung for a long time about the spot had cleared away, they could only see the empty space which had bewildered me.

Here, as everywhere else, it is the monotony of these occurrences which makes them so terrible; able-bodied men, women, and young girls were carried away with the cattle and the machines. Human beings and inanimate things were equally prey, and went together to make up the booty. Under the tall and fragrant lime-trees is the wrought-iron gate, of old French workmanship, where our friend Count B., the master of the château, stood to welcome us in those days of a former life that we used to call peace. He stayed in his house, although it was occupied by the staff of Prince E., because he was the mayor of the village, and our American friends recollect that he took charge of the food supplies.

He also was carried away as a hostage, while his house rose from the earth and then subsided upon its old foundations. He was part of the baggage of the staff, borne off as wild beasts, chased out of their dens, drag their prey with them. Where was he? No one knew, and the few old people who are still here spoke of his disappearance with a sort of terror. "They took him away," they say, and always with the same gesture, pointing to the road. One expected to have them make

the sign of the cross, as if they had seen the devil and his angels.

Nothing is so monotonous in nature or in life as that which is excessive; the heart and mind both become exhausted from gazing into an abyss. Here there was no varied and complex play of thought, no shade of meaning to be discovered; everywhere there was the same unchanging and funereal gesture of destruction wherever old people, or men, or children have lived and loved and believed in life, drinking from its brimming cup gladly. Words failed before this barren repetition, and a dull amazement crept over mind and heart; thought stopped in confusion, and one despaired of humanity.

They have written "Nicht aergern, nur wundern," and they are right, because for a moment our ideas of our divinely appointed destiny, of justice, and of an overruling Providence withdraw behind the veils which hide the face of God.

Here, outside the park, in the path leading to the public washing-place, was the tree against which the curé leaned and waited, with his eyes fixed upon his breviary, and with a calm countenance, the bullets which

were to pierce his heart; his last breath murmured a prayer.

And this was the road, between the fallen poplars, over which the women and young girls were driven, like some new sort of cattle, toward the German stables. As they started on the same day, at the same signal, the files of captives from different villages must often have met and recognized each other, as they had done before on holidays, on the feast of Saint John, for instance, when the people went, laughing and gossiping, from the hamlets to the market-towns, to sing at vespers and dance the bourrée in the evening.

For this part of the country is not merely France, it is the oldest France of all, the Ile-de-France, where the joy of living found its highest expression, in labor and in love. No other soil on the earth has been kinder or more faithful to those who lived by it; nowhere else have men so burst into song, as they have in this heart of our old life, amusing themselves by playing with villanelles, matching the rhymes of tiercets, and polishing the flowing lines of sonnets, to garland the beauty of French existence. The walls of our churches were a network of stone stretched

between the sapphires and emeralds of their glowing windows; the passage of the centuries and the vicissitudes of the most cruel wars had left them untouched. Every house, every cottage, had its own air, its own look, its own expression of continuity; here there might be a dwelling with gables on the street, and mullioned windows, divided by graceful columns, and there a humble abode with rough-cast walls on a narrow alley, an old nest sheltered by its old roof on the old soil. Everywhere one found traces of the fine distinctions which our forebears, although living side by side, had been careful to establish, as marking the shades of difference which gave life its variety.

The haggard face of the moon, once veiled by branching trees, shone on a desert—as we picked our way through the ruins, and every now and then our feet would strike some fragment of sculpture, where our artisans had wrought a vine-leaf, a spray of bindweed, the sheath of a buttercup, or an acorn and the notched outline of the oak-leaf. If I picked up a bit of broken stone, the cold light showed me the careful and loving work of an old craftsman's hand.

We dined underground, in the shelter which

the German prince had taken pains to make comfortable. The old chairs of gilded wood and the ebony table were still there, and when the growling of the French cannon sounded too near, the prince and his staff took refuge here, twenty-six feet down. The earth of the floor and walls was hidden by round billets of birchwood, and Bible texts were scrawled in Gothic text on this wooden sheathing. A frieze, painted on unbleached linen, showed the classic German landscape; a wide river between hills and, perched on the crest of each hill, a town bristling with turrets and watch-towers. This was the lair into which the beast retired to think out his plans of destruction.

The evening was a sad one. Our American friends, Morton and Rivards, had been here three months ago to distribute food, as the barges bringing it came up a canal between two bends of the Oise, not far away. The women waited their turns patiently at the communal depot, and then went off together, carrying their scanty bags of rice and coffee and little boxes of bacon and lard. They were still in prison, but a ray of hope had filtered in. They dared not speak to the Americans in words, but their faces, haggard with fasting

and waiting, spoke for them when the rolling of the French guns passed over their heads. The enemy had no power to stop that approaching thunder; lips might be forbidden to speak, but eyelids could not be sealed, and the women's eyes spoke and hoped.

"What an ignoble idea it was," said Morton, "to carry off the women and girls! I wonder what German head thought of it first! It profanes humanity!" he added gloomily.

"It came from the frenzy of gamblers who had staked all they had upon what they thought was sure to win, and who found they had lost the game," said Rivards. "They were playing for the 'Zukunft,' a word to which they are much attached. The 'Zukunft,' the future—they had made a bargain with her, as they might have done with the devil; they sold their souls and the lives of a million and a half of their men, who lie here on the borders and in the heart of France, and whose bones will mingle with the stones of the land they invaded. They invented cabalistic words, and offered them as fetiches to a fetich-loving nation. Ask any German with an ordinary education for the reason of this war, and he will answer 'die Zukunft,' as the ignorant soldier, turning his gray cap in his hands,

will say 'der Kaiser.' There are also certain words to which they have given a force that is almost dynamic, by dressing them up with the prestige of religion. They say 'it is the word of Redemption, the "Lösungs-Wort."' It is all very well for them to tell us that 'theories are gray, and life a green tree'; they have stuffed themselves with gray theories, and it is here that the green tree will be planted.

"They have a great many ideas, most of them false; they have a great deal of religion, but it has been perverted. Never have there been so many arguments as to the advisability of putting more fertilizers around the green tree, never has there been so much calculation, ending in a hopeless tangle of figures, never has so much dogmatism made so many sophistries. They confess it when they speak of 'those delusions of life of which men cannot be deprived without depriving them also of life itself.' I have heard them say 'Truth is not in the light which illumines, but in the eye which sees'—and then they look through a glass which distorts everything; they have opticians who make the spectacles that you may behold on the noses of German soldiers. 'Excelsior Gedanke'—they invoke the super-

human thought of their superman, who calls upon them all the time to grow, as if they were some monster which would never stop. And in order to 'grow,' they hatch and turn out troops by the million, as much alike as a regiment of tin soldiers. They have taught falsehoods 'useful to life,' and they have said: 'We have reorganized the blind forces of nature; now it is for us to wield the thunder that will shake the world.'"

* * *

It was late when we got back to Compiègne. The night was mild, with many stars, and the moonlight lingered on the ruined landscape. We drove slowly, for fear of running into fallen trees, until at last we found ourselves again in the forest of Ourscamp, a living forest, with the wind rustling in its oaks and beeches, with delicate odors from its damp earth, and the throng of its tree-trunks still dimly to be seen in the shadows, upright, orderly, and numerous as armies. Armies . . . the word is ever in one's mind.

* * *

Two days later we stood on the deck of an ocean liner at Havre—the *Espagne*. Hoover

was sailing for the United States; sovereign over wheat in his great republic, he was going to take possession of his kingdom. Two of his young delegates were going with him; others were beginning to organize the services of the American Red Cross, while others again were preparing to incorporate themselves into the first small nucleus of officers and men around whom the American army would gather.

It was some weeks since Mrs. Vernon had left us, and we were beginning to receive her first letters. What a born missionary she was! Even we ourselves, children of France though we were, felt that she was urging us to greater effort.

“France is the soul of the world,” she said. “Write to us, let us hear your voices; we are like Saint Thomas, we must see and feel as well as believe. Send us something of your true soul, of the fire whose sparks are in your soldiers and your peasants, and hidden on the hearths of your homes. It is from your torch that the mighty flame must be kindled which will sweep over all our land.”

So the little group was to be scattered, to undertake new tasks. We had come to say farewell, and as he walked up and down the

ship's deck Hoover spread before us a comprehensive view of what might be expected from the effort of the United States.

Although this modern Moses had already demanded, obtained, and distributed manna to the people during a time of sore trial, I confess that we were still somewhat incased in incredulity, like the Hebrews of old.

"You are mistaken," said Hoover (and he showed his impatient faith by walking faster). "I assure you that it will not be long. The movement which is now taking place among our people belongs to the order of moral and religious phenomena, the action of which, as you know, is instantaneous. Under other circumstances, how shall I express it? We should have had to go through a rotation of feelings before throwing our armies into Europe; we should have had to drag our men away from their settled faith in peace and accustom them gradually to the idea of war. You know it is one of your old writers who has said 'Peace fills the mouth with honey.' But now an alarm has been given in the United States which has aroused our national conscience. Love for France has become a vital force in millions of brave young hearts.

"An intolerable wrong is being committed in the world, and we cannot allow it.

"It is true that we have neither the traditions nor the habits of a military nation; we shall not feel the war in our body and our blood, but we shall feel it in our souls, and our action will be all the more rapid.

"We have no warlike traditions nor habits," he repeated, and he added with one of his quick, thoughtful smiles: "I know you are thinking that, but, on the other hand, we have none of the old wheels which turn on themselves without going on. We shall profit by the lessons and also by the faults of every one . . . yes, of every one, and on the whole we shall turn out something new—something new founded on old methods, as we did in our beginning."

He went back over what he had seen in the course of the war, and spoke of men whom he had known in Belgium and France, speaking of them with deep feeling. Some were hidden in jails or prison-camps, some had been shot to death as "traitors," because even in their agony they had been true to their country, and he added in a low voice, as if speaking to himself:

“This war has become a religion, for it has had its martyrs.”

A bell rang; it was the signal for us who were not sailing to leave the ship.

Two hours later we stood on the heights of Sainte Adresse and watched the steamer as she went down the channel, until the smoke from her funnels had faded against the sky.

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